

CHRISTIAN FORMATION:
DISCIPLESHIP OF YOUTH AND MILLENNIALS IN THE CHURCH OF GOD
OF PROPHECY IN THE BAHAMAS

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To my first great teacher, my biggest inspiration, my loving mother, Willamae Ferguson,
who taught me the value of education and the strength of motherhood.

You will always be my first love.

Because humans were created in the image and likeness of God, Christian formation is somewhat intrinsic. Discipleship, however, is not. Discipleship is a choice; we should all choose wisely.

—Ghandi Thompson

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PREFACE

In retrospect this project was years in the making. I vividly remember my time as a youth leader, struggling to effectively engage and encourage teenagers and young adults to commit wholeheartedly to Christ. I was untrained at the time, and resources were limited. Many days I felt incompetent and unprepared for such an awesome responsibility. Nonetheless, God's amazing call to ministry overshadowed my insecurities and, as a result, I vowed to aid other youth leaders and youth alike in their personal Christian formation.

Years later, my passion for youth development and spirituality remains, and so when the opportunity came to choose a thesis-project, I did not have to choose. "Christian Formation: Discipleship of Teens and Millennials in the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas" had already chosen me.

I am humbled and appreciative to have answered that call.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BBB	Bahamas Brass Band
COGOP	Church of God of Prophecy
NYM	National Youth Ministries
TCC	Tabernacle Concert Choir
VBS	Vacation Bible School
VLB	Victory Leaders Band

GLOSSARY

Adolescents: Persons between the ages of thirteen and nineteen; also known as teenagers.

Awana: A nonprofit Christian program designed to help equip children for the future.

Family Islands: Other islands of the Bahamas besides New Providence that are inhabited; also referred to as Out Islands.

Millennials: Persons born in the early to mid-1980s up to the mid-1990s; also known as Generation Y.

Youth: Often referred to as the period between childhood and maturity. For the sake of this thesis-project the term “youth” will include everyone between the ages of twelve to thirty-seven, inclusive of adolescents and millennials.

ABSTRACT

For years the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas served as a lighthouse, leading many sinners to Christ and assisting many Bahamians in their Christian formation. However, times have changed, and although Pentecostalism continues to grow globally, many churches in the western world have closed their doors in recent years. Secularism and materialism are trending, and there is a need for churches to be more prayerful and strategic in their evangelism and discipleship efforts.

This research was designed to explore Christian formation: discipleship of teens and millennials in the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas. Such research included examination of different traditions of the COGOP to determine which ones were most effective and what needs to change moving forward. To fully understand the church's current dynamics it was necessary to garner participation from leaders in the church, as well as those whom they lead, specifically teens and millennials.

The results of this research, inclusive of literature review, biblical and theological implications, suggest that professional training, teaching, mentorship, and creative programming are critical to discipleship. Additionally, the outcome of this study indicates that teens and millennials can exercise a greater level of discipline and personal responsibility in their own spiritual growth.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

The Bahama Islands are a premier tourist destination, popular for sun, sand, and sea. Yet in recent times, these beautiful islands have experienced an increase in crime and violence. Many persons have tried to discern what caused the moral decay in a country once known as a Christian nation. This issue is complex, as there are many contributing factors that have led to the country's current state. Arguably, one of the key aspects of the current crisis is the lack of Christian formation in today's youth. Evidence of this is visible in various sectors of the local community, manifesting as lack of conflict resolution, promiscuity, and materialism. While the Bahamian government, educators, and other nation builders scramble to find solutions, the church struggles to retain and strengthen its relevance and influence in the Bahamian society.

Times have certainly changed and proclamation of the gospel from the pulpit on a Sunday morning is not enough to disciple this current generation. Engaging youth in this new age poses many challenges, especially in the western world where technology and social media are changing the way people communicate and interact with each other. While there is a need for Bahamians to return to the Christian values that once guided this island paradise, the role the church plays in this venture must be tactically discerned.

Perhaps a starting point toward affecting change in the Bahamas includes the Church of God of Prophecy taking greater strides to assist adolescents and millennials in their Christian formation. Such an initiative may require the church analyzing the

feasibility of revitalizing its evangelism strategy and discipleship programs to meet the needs of youth in this current political and social climate. Failure to engage and disciple teens and millennials limits the church's reach, resulting in further moral decay, an escalation of criminal activity, and an increase of social ills in the years to come.

Clear Statement of the Problem

The problem seen in society due to the lack of Christian formation is three-dimensional. First, lack of Christian formation is reflected in every decision a person makes; thus, it directly affects that individual's worldview and quality of life. Second, everyone interacts with others in public forums. Hence private spirituality affects how persons engage others in the wider community, whether destructively or productively. Finally, if the church is to retain and increase its influence in the community, it needs to attract young and faithful witnesses to participate in the continuous sharing of the gospel. This is important because the gospel provides shalom for individuals, as well as the city.

This research thus seeks to explore the need for Christian formation: discipleship of youth and millennials in the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas.

Rationale and Parameters of This Research

The Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas is the religious institution primarily responsible for the researcher's formation; thus, this study was designed to focus on Christian formation: discipleship of youth and millennials in the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas. With many churches already struggling in this area, such a

research is critical to the survival and growth of the church, as well as the development of the nation.

Teens and millennials were chosen as the focus of this research because today's teens are tomorrow's leaders. Likewise, millennials are already assuming their rightful position in various sectors of the community, and in a few years many of them, who have not already, will be among the senior leaders in corporate Bahamas and government. As adolescents and young adults continue to excel in all areas of their lives, their moral values and worldviews will increasingly shape the Bahamian way of life, impacting laws, customs, fashion, and commerce. This demographic thus plays a strategic role in the direction of the nation's future. Hence, there is a need to explore their spirituality and how the church can assist in their Christian formation.

Because there are many broad and narrow definitions used to describe spiritual formation, the terminology "Christian formation" was chosen to emphasize Christ-like formation. For the sake of this thesis-project, Christian formation is defined as the process whereby the Holy Spirit shapes and matures the believer's spirituality in conjunction with his or her intentional efforts. The desired result of such a partnership is transformation to Christ-likeness and discipleship. Thus, this study seeks to provide a framework for church leaders, youth, and millennials alike that results in greater Christian formation in Bahamian youth.

The demographic that falls within the parameters of this research is mainly persons between the ages of thirteen and thirty-seven. Kirk Rising, International Youth Director of The Church of God of Prophecy, confirms that youth in the COGOP's international context relate to persons between the ages of twelve and thirty-five. The

Bahamas traditionally recognized persons between the ages of thirteen to forty as those eligible for youth ministry. However, within this group lie different categories of youth. Persons over twelve and up to nineteen are considered teens, and individuals over nineteen and up to thirty-five and in some cases forty were viewed as young adults. Nonetheless, this study will refer to persons thirteen to seventeen as teens or adolescents since eighteen is the legal age in the Bahamas. Persons twenty-three to thirty-seven are millennials, also referred to as Generation Y, and are typically persons born in the early to mid-1980s up to the mid-1990s. The term “youth,” however, in the parameters of this thesis-project will include both teens (adolescents) and millennials.

A Brief Overview of the Bahamas

To better understand the complexities of discipleship of youth and millennials in the Bahamian context, it is necessary to explore the anthropology and geography of the Bahamas, the history of the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas, and its doctrine and its traditions. This must be done while simultaneously examining what has changed within the church over the years.

The Bahamas, a relatively small country, sits north of the Greater Antilles and east of southern Florida.¹ It was originally inhabited by the Lucayans, who were believed to have migrated from South America. In 1492 Christopher Columbus landed in the Bahamas, and in 1717 King George of England appointed Woods Rogers the first governor of the Bahamas. In 1973 the Bahamas gained independence from Britain but remained a part of the Commonwealth of Nations.

1. Paul Albury, *The Story of the Bahamas* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1991), 1.

The early years of the Bahamas were filled with piracy, privateering, farming, and fishing. Europeans brought slaves from Africa to work the cotton fields, and thus most of the population today are black descendants of slave workers. While the slaves brought with them some of their African traditions, slaves were introduced to their owners' religion, mainly Catholicism, the Church of England, Methodism, and English Reform Protestantism (Puritans). Pentecostalism arrived in the Bahamas much later.

The Bahamas is unlike any other Caribbean country, consisting of an archipelago of more than seven hundred islands and cays. While many of the islands are uninhabitable, approximately twenty-five islands are occupied year-round as the home of Bahamian citizens and as winter residences for foreigners. The capital of the Bahamas is Nassau, which is located on the island of New Providence. According to The Government of the Bahamas Department of Statistics 2010 Census, New Providence is the most densely populated island in the Bahamas with 246,329 residents. The other top five densely populated islands include Grand Bahama, Abaco, Eleuthera, Andros, and Exuma. (Please see the map, Appendix A.)²

It is important to note that each island of the Bahamas has its unique culture and, in some cases, distinct accent. It is the individuality of each island that contributes to the rich, authentic Bahamian ethos. Bahamians working in New Providence or Paradise Island (a smaller island adjacent and joined by a bridge) enjoy a more contemporary life due to modern infrastructure. Having all the necessary infrastructure, Nassau located on New Providence is the capital city of the Bahamas. New Providence hosts all the government central offices, many offshore banks, and is the most traveled tourist

2. Accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas>.

destination in the Bahamas. Residents living on Grand Bahama and Abaco enjoy a similar level of infrastructure as New Providence, but not as much foreign investment, although these islands are relatively developed. Islands such as Exuma, Eleuthera, and Andros explore other industries beyond tourism, mainly fishing, farming, and boat building. These islands generally enjoy a slower pace of life. The population is far less, infrastructure is basic, and there is minimal to no traffic. This mode of life impacts exposure, the sharing of information, and generally the formation of the island's people. Thus, it is the researcher's view that any meaningful research on Bahamian spirituality should include residents of at least three islands other than New Providence for a comprehensive reflection of the Bahamas.

The History of the Pentecostal Movement in the Bahamas

The Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas boasts of being the first mission of the Church of God outside of the United States of America dating as early as 1909.³ Trailblazers in the early years include Edmund and Rebecca Barr and Wilmore and Arabelle Eneas. Their work was later joined by Robert and Ida Evans, their adopted son, and Carl Padgett in early 1910.⁴

Ambrose Jessup (A. J.) Tomlinson, the first overseer of the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, and other band members arrived in the Bahamas on February 16, 1911.⁵ During this visit A. J. Tomlinson preached in a series of street meetings not only

3. Michael S. Swann, *The Holy Jumpers: A Concise History of the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas 1909–1974* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2018), 5.

4. Swann, *Holy Jumpers*, 5.

5. *Diary of A. J. Tomlinson 1901–1924* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2012), 160.

in Nassau but also on Long Island and Exuma.⁶ He made several visits to the Bahamas after his trip to oversee the work in the Bahamas. Other early pioneers of the Church of God in the Bahamas include Stanley R. Ferguson, Alvin Moss, Frank Cunningham, and Alfred E. Ferguson and Lillie Ferguson.⁷ The Church of God in the Bahamas grew tremendously in the early years, and in 1922 the Church of God in the Bahamas hosted its first annual convention.⁸

By 1923 the Church of God internationally was experiencing turbulence which trickled down to the work in the Bahamas, and so in 1925 the church in the Bahamas officially split. Two separate congregations were formed, and a new Taylor Street church was organized.⁹ However, it was not until 1953 that the church now known as the Church of God of Prophecy was officially incorporated in the Bahamas. The other congregation held onto the name, the Church of God; thus, the earliest history of the Church of God and the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas is essentially the same.

The Pentecostal movement continued to grow in both churches. Similarly, a kindred relationship emerged and remains, even to this date, as there is much admiration and support between the two congregations. Both churches host their national convention/conclave in March and district crusades in January annually. Thus, despite the early separation, the Church of God of Prophecy has built a noble reputation throughout the Bahamas. It is best known for its spirited music and charismatic worship earning the title of “the jumper church.”

6. *Diary of A. J. Tomlinson 1901–1924*, 173, 174.

7. Alfred Ferguson, *A Short History of the Early Beginnings of the Church of God of Prophecy* (self-published; 1976, 2007).

8. Swann, *Holy Jumpers*, ix.

9. Swann, *Holy Jumpers*, ix.

The Church of God of Prophecy Organizational Structure

The Church of God of Prophecy boasts of being a worldwide church with more than a million members in 135 nations of the world.¹⁰ Its international office is in Cleveland, Tennessee, and is headed by Bishop Sam Clemens, the general overseer. The general overseer presides over the worldwide affairs of the church with the help of general presbyters who oversee various international regions. The general presbyters and general overseer appoint regional/national overseers.¹¹ National overseers appoint district overseers, and they appoint local pastors.

Bishop Dr. Franklin Ferguson is the seventh and current national overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas. The national office is located on East Street on the island of New Providence and is run by an administrative team consisting of four persons. Dr. Rovenia Ferguson, assistant to the nation overseer, confirmed that currently the COGOP has 60 churches, 5 missions and approximately 4,500 members with 207 licensed ministers as per the minutes of the last national assembling in March 2018. Out of the 60 churches in the Bahamas, Nassau is home to approximately 3,200 members (71% of the overall Bahamian membership), 21 churches and 3 missions. This is not surprising since Nassau is the most densely populated island of the Bahamas.

It is important to note that the early church planting strategy included building churches within communities to evangelize the residents of that community. Today many of the local churches serve as commuter churches, and in some instances as much as 70 percent of a church's membership do not live or work in the same community where they

10. About Church of God of Prophecy International Offices, accessed October 10, 2018, <http://cogop.org/>.

11. Adrian L. Varlack Sr., *Foundations: Church of God of Prophecy Concise History, Polity, Doctrine, and Future* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishers, 2010), 94.

attend church. The church's inability to attract and retain many persons from within its surrounding community highlights the discipleship challenges the Church of God of Prophecy faces. Since many COGOP churches are in the inner city it is important for the church to connect with the residents in these communities because statistics indicate it is in the inner city where much of the crime and violence occurs.

Commuting to and from church can also be problematic, as it is time-consuming and can lead to members opting to attend fewer services. Also influencing families' decision to attend only one service a week is high gas prices. Low attendance results in minimal face-to-face discipleship opportunities, especially when those who attend only one service a week choose Sunday morning service, a service which focuses on corporate worship and a sermon with little to no room for discussion or intimate dialogue.

Doctrinal Beliefs

The Church of God of Prophecy believes the Bible to be God's holy Word and embraces biblical doctrine as taught in the New Testament.¹² The church's website lists twenty-eight New Testament teachings as outlined in the table below.

Table 1:1: Doctrinal Beliefs of the Church of God of Prophecy

Number	THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY	New Testament Reference
1	Repentance	Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3
2	Justification	Romans 5:19; Titus 3:7
3	Regeneration / Born Again	Titus 3:5;

12. Doctrine, Church of God of Prophecy International Offices, accessed October 10, 2018, <http://cogop.org/about/doctrine/>.

		Ephesians 2:1, 4-5
4	Sanctification	Romans 5:2; 1 Corinthians 1:30
5	Holiness	Luke 1:74-75; 1 Thessalonians 4:7
6	Water Baptism	Matthew 28:19;, Mark 1:8-10
7	Baptism with the Holy Spirit	Matthew 3:11; Luke 24:49-53
8	Speaking in Other Tongues as Evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost	John 15:26; Acts 2:4
9	Full Restoration of the Gifts to the Church	1 Corinthians 12:1, 7-10, 28, 31
10	Signs Following Believers	Mark 16:17- 20; Romans 15:18- 19
11	Fruit of the Spirit	Galatians 5:22- 23; Ephesians 5:9
12	Divine Healing	Matthew 8:17; James 5:14, 16
13	The Lord's Supper	Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-33
14	Washing the Saints' Feet	John 13:4-17; 1 Timothy 5:10
15	Tithing and Giving	Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42
16	Restitution Where Possible	Matthew 3:8; Luke 19:8-9
17	Premillennial Second Coming of Jesus	Matthew 24:27; 1 Corinthians 15:1-52
18	Resurrection	John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15
19	Eternal Life for the Righteous	Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:30

20	Eternal Punishment for the Wicked	Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9
21	Abstinence from All Liquor or Strong Drink	1 Corinthians 5:11; Galatians 5:21
22	Concerning Tobacco, Opium, Morphine	1 Corinthians 10:31-32; 2 Corinthians 7:1
23	Concerning Food and Drink	Romans 14:2; 1 Corinthians 8:8
24	On the Sabbath	Romans 14:5-6; Colossians 2:16
25	Adornment	Matthew 16:24; 1 John 2:16
26	Membership in Lodges /Secret Societies	Matthew 5:34; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17
27	Wholesome Speech of the Believers	Matthew 5:34; James 5:12
28	Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage	Matthew 5:32; Mark 10:12

It is the teaching on sanctification that correlates directly to the research in this thesis-project. The COGOP believes that “sanctification, like salvation, ultimately spans the lifetime of the believer.”¹³ The church further recognizes that there is a responsibility in sanctification for believers to practice certain habits in their intentional pursuit of holiness. Thus, the church acknowledges that while sanctification is a work of grace after justification, believers too have a role to play in their pursuit of Christ-likeness.¹⁴ Such a perspective on sanctification should encourage church leaders to create opportunities where new converts can practice spiritual disciplines.

13. Varlack, *Foundations*, 120.

14. Varlack, *Foundations*, 121.

Local Traditions

It is the researcher's view that at the core of the church's discipleship challenges are lost traditions that were once essential to the church's discipleship program. These traditions include summer camp, The Bahamas Brass Band, outreach and evangelism, all-night prayer meeting/prayer meeting, national youth ministry/local youth ministry (Victory Leaders Band), Sunday school, and Bible study. This list is by no means an extensive one of how the church in the Bahamas has ministered to its youth, but it does represent some of the more popular traditions. Consequently, to understand fully the nature of the problem we must critically explore what worked effectively in the past and how these programs or ministries have changed in recent times.

Before closely examining the traditions of the COGOP in the Bahamas, it is important to note that some of these traditions were designed for different impact. For instance, the church's annual parade serves mainly as an attraction, the church's annual crusade is a form of engagement and evangelism. On the other hand, Sunday school and prayer meeting are traditions that aided discipleship. These terms are being used loosely, as in most cases there is a considerable amount of overlapping. Together, however, the church's traditions in the past effectively served the local Bahamian community; preaching holiness, practicing divine healing and equipping the saints.

It may also be useful to examine the church's national administrative structure, as this also plays a role in attracting people to the church. The National Office of the COGOP in the Bahamas currently employs four persons only, none of whom are under the age of fifty. Additionally, out of the sixty churches in the Bahamas there are few female lead or senior pastors. Similarly, many bishops in the church were appointed after

they were over the age of fifty, and there are only a few ordained ministers under the age of thirty. Many of the national appointed offices are held by members over the age of forty, and in some instances, these same persons occupy several positions in the church. Innocuously, this can send the message that there is little leadership opportunities for millennials and even less room for female leadership at the pastoral level. While recently the church has been more intentional about integrating emerging leaders, it is important that the COGOP in the Bahamas is not perceived as discriminatory toward youth and females because this can create challenges in attracting persons in the desired grouping.

Youth Ministries/Victory Leaders Band

Victory Leaders Band (VLB), now referred to as youth ministries, was introduced to the COGOP in the Bahamas in 1929. VLB was instrumental in the development of gifts and talents of youth.¹⁵ Likewise, youth ministry today still serves as the primary ministry responsible for fostering an environment where young people can evolve spiritually as well as holistically.

Perhaps one of the most problematic issues in youth ministry is lack of adequate funding both at the local level and at the national level. The national overseer appoints a national youth ministry director, or as in recent times, co-directors (consisting of a husband-and-wife team) with limited funding. Although the National Youth Ministry (NYM) leaders schedule fundraisers on the church's national calendar, some fundraising efforts were not as successful as envisioned. Having served on several National Youth Ministries council, serving directly under four NYM leaders over the past fifteen years, the researcher knows inadequate funding was one of the major challenges multiple

15. Swann, *Holy Jumpers*, 495.

national youth leaders faced. In many instances the original vision of an event had to be tweaked to still host the event. Hence there was a direct correlation between lack of funding and the implementation of a successful event, as funding impacts marketing, venue, speakers, décor and creativity. On a few occasions, NYM events were partially sponsored by a government grant. In the past ten years the grant was most instrumental in funding National Youth Ministry's biggest project, national youth conference. However, in 2017 the grant fell through, adversely affecting the operation of NYM that year.

Failure to host qualitative youth-related events and programs consistently due to budget constraints directly affects the church's ability to engage and disciple teens and millennials. This is not a problem at the national level only, since in many instances local churches also struggle to attract and engage youths due to minimal funding.

Summer Camp

In the past, summer camps were an effective means of impartation and discipleship. Summer camps, as the name suggests, were held during the summer months after school closed for the summer break. Each year, camp attendees would arrive, lost, burned out from school work, confused, and hurting. They would leave camp having experienced salvation, renewal, and sweet fellowship. Summer camp was held either at a camp site in New Providence or on the island of Abaco. The camps provided an opportunity for teens from across the Bahamas to assemble, fellowship, and grow spiritually. No cell phones, television, and other worldly distractions were permitted. Rather summer camps were Christocentric. Attendees were encouraged to pursue a relationship with God, engage nature, and foster friendships with each other. Godly camp

organizers and counselors were committed to imparting biblical truths through creative lessons and activities designed to transform campers.

In its early years camp records reflect that camp registration often reached its desired capacity. However, in recent years, summer camp has experienced a serious decline in registration. While there are many extenuating factors that have contributed to the reduction in camp enrollment, the church has not exhausted the transformational opportunities available in this traditional instrument. It is the researcher's view that summer camp was one of the most impactful formation experiences that the church offered to teens and millennials.

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School (VBS), which also occurs during summer months, is another effective tradition of the COGOP. VBS usually occurs during the summer months at many of the local churches. Teachers and other volunteers dedicate a full week to teaching children and teenagers biblical principles on a chosen theme. Each year a new VBS theme is chosen by the leaders, and classes typically start around 9:00 am and end shortly after 1:00 pm.

VBS offers a great solution for working parents during the summer months, as it caters primarily to children between the ages of three to fifteen. Many older teenagers participate in summer employment programs, which in some instances conflict with VBS scheduling. Nonetheless, teens who can attend enjoy Bible-based, fun-filled activities, and snacks, all often offered free of charge or at a minimal registration fee.

Although VBS is an effective ministerial tool that usually experiences a high attendance from persons within the surrounding community, there is still room to further maximize VBS's potential. These opportunities will be discussed later.

Music Ministry

The Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas is well known for its spirited music. The music ministry of the church encompasses talented musicians, anointed singers and the world-renowned Bahamas Brass Band (BBB), which was formally organized in 1925.¹⁶ Since its inception the BBB has grown and inspired the creation of two other bands/segments, the junior band and the youth band. The Bahamas Brass Band has played internationally in several different forums, mainly the General Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy. While mostly known for its spirit-filled music, the band has contributed greatly to the development and discipleship of many youth, particularly males. Bishop Hermes Ferguson, the band's first director was known as a "no-nonsense man who insisted that his members were Spirit filled and musically competent."¹⁷

The Bahamas Brass Band recruitment in its initial years was "specifically geared towards building both a men's ministry while also strengthening its capacity to solidify a Christian fellowship."¹⁸ Sean Gibson, in *The Making of a Band*, further argues that the strong mentorship initiatives within the band were instrumental in developing some of the church's current leaders. He explained that as travel guardians to the younger generation, older band members used this opportunity to mentor the younger members by helping

16. Sean Gibson, *The Making of a Band: A History of the World-Famous Bahamas Brass Band* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2012), 4.

17. Gibson, *Making of a Band*, 5.

18. Gibson, *Making of a Band*, 15.

them “strengthen their walk with God through practical avenues including Bible studies, devotions, and counseling.” Strong relationships were developed, and the band fostered great interactions including healthy dialogue on various matters shaping young men holistically, especially in their Christian formation.

Joining the band in its initial years was no easy task. Band leaders were concerned about the spirituality of members. Each band member had to confess publicly their experience of salvation and join the church. Gibson explained that after members joined the band they faced a period of scrutiny, where band members were tested and evaluated. Membership included attending a series of revivals followed by a decision by the elders in the band about the new members’ spiritual preparedness. Band members also had to exercise their commitment by being faithful to band practices and church engagements.

The required level of discipline and commitment evident in the earlier years of the Bahamas Brass Band seemingly is not exercised by junior and youth band members today. In recent times, if the youth or junior band is invited to perform at an event, members are often late and only show up in time to perform. In some instances, if they are on time, they are rarely seated together from the inception or the duration of the event. Rather, they perform and then leave the event or lurk around on the outside. While various societal changes have affected the band’s functionality, the band still possesses great formative potential for young Bahamians, especially males.

The Tabernacle Concert Choir (TCC), which is perhaps the church’s most reputable choir, was also instrumental in molding the church’s youth. Many former TCC members boast of how spirit-filled TCC rehearsals were especially since it was very common for rehearsals to morph into intimate sessions of worship and prayer. Choir

directors like Alvin Moss, Pastor Kendal Simmons, and the late Lorna Joy Watson Simons were instrumental in developing some of the church's current choir directors, soloists, and praise and worship singers due to their mentorship that initiated in TCC rehearsals.

Prayer Services/Lock-Ins

All-night prayer meeting is another tradition that has experienced a decline in recent years. All-night prayer services were typically a time when people would spend the entire night locked in a local church seeking the Lord in fervent prayer for the nation and the body of Christ. Entire households would attend, including children and teens. Although the children and teens would often fall asleep throughout the night, the fervent cries of the elders and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit often initiated another cycle of prayer, as the saints cried out to God. For many teenagers these services provided their first organic charismatic and Pentecostal experience. Additionally, as the saints travailed in prayer, teens would marvel at how fervently they prayed. Occasionally, leaders would challenge teens or new converts to lead out in various sessions of prayer during the night.

While many churches no longer host all-night prayer meetings, due to increased crime, busy church calendars, and other social factors, some churches now host lock-ins. Lock-ins have replaced all-night prayer services in many churches. This replacement has occurred unfortunately at the loss of intense prayer times. Instead there are fun activities to engage and entertain throughout the night. The concept of the lock-in captures some of the same elements of spiritual impartation of a camp as well as the traditional prayer meeting. However, sometimes the prayer emphasis would be lost as organizers seek to

make the event too activity driven with games in their efforts to engage young, easily distracted participants.

The reshaping of all-night prayer meetings to lock-ins has been successful to some degree. At times there are sessions of deep sharing and impartation. However, in many instances this is not the case. The desired outcome is to ensure that the lock-ins do not become social events only. The world needs teens and millennials who play but also pray.

Outreach, Evangelism, and Media

Traditionally, street meetings provided a relevant and cost-efficient opportunity for the church to engage the wider community. In the past, street meetings entailed the use of an audio system on the corner of a street in a local community to proclaim the gospel of Christ. The speakers were loud enough for persons to hear the good news even in the confinement of their homes. Street meetings therefore would reach all walks of life: the old, young, professional and unemployed as the gospel would reach them in their personal spaces. During street meetings church members would give out Christian brochures and witness to those passing by. Singers would sing hymns followed by an evangelistic message and a call for prayers. Many persons would often respond to the altar call, and church members would help lead persons to Christ.

Although street meetings were not specifically targeted toward adolescents and young adults, this approach to evangelism reached many gang members and youths while playing on basketball courts and in community parks. Street meetings were the training platform where many young adults learned how to witness effectively to others. While

street meetings still occur they are infrequent. Additionally the COGOP in the Bahamas now explores other modern avenues to engage the wider community.

“Lifeline” is a five-minute television program the COGOP in the Bahamas currently hosts. The show airs once a week. Similarly, “Moments of Prophecy” is a weekly broadcast that is aired every Sunday morning that reaches hundreds of Bahamians, especially those on the Family Islands.¹⁹ While both the radio and television ministries have garnered consistent followers, youth and millennials do not make up most of this demographic. There is room to attract a younger fan base.

In addition to the radio and television show, the COGOP in the Bahamas also hosts a website, a Facebook page, and a page in the weekly religious section in *The Nassau Guardian*, one of the local newspapers. While all these media outlets play an important role in the church’s media presence, it is also critical to note that some of these media outlets reach a more mature audience. It should be noted here that although the directors of the various media platforms have reached out to teens and millennials to work jointly on some projects, there is still a greater opportunity for more diversity and integration of different generations on these teams. More intergenerational team work in this area is critical to succession planning and maximizing the church’s use of technology to attract and engage youth in the world.

Christian Education Ministry

The Christian education arm of the church is perhaps one of the bigger ministerial platforms in the Church of God of Prophecy. Both Sunday school and Bible study fall under this umbrella. In the past the Sunday school ministry of the Church of God of

19. Other residential islands in the Bahamas besides New Providence.

Prophecy in the Bahamas was one the most influential ways the church interacted with children and youth in the community. In the church's earlier years, Sunday school was held on Sunday afternoon, and not only did COGOP members attend but also children from the neighboring community. Influential businessmen and local politicians alike often speak about the positive influence the church's Sunday school had on their spiritual formation. Sunday school was the fundamental ministry where children were taught the scriptures, biblical principles, and songs. It was the forum where lasting friendships were formed and a love for the Holy Scriptures was birthed.

Over the years Sunday school has changed dramatically. Sunday school in some local churches has moved from having its own clearly defined space on the church's calendar to an hour before Sunday morning worship service. Many avid Sunday school attendees argue that the hour just before Sunday morning worship is not enough time for healthy dialogue and often leads to the lesson not fully being explored. Second, when Sunday school takes places on Sunday morning before the worship service, it can be overwhelming on the body and mind. One can spend almost up to four hours in church on a Sunday morning when combining the time for both Sunday school and Sunday worship service. However, some churches have moved the Sunday school to the mid-week service or have replaced it with Bible study.

Bible study is another avenue the church uses to aid its discipleship efforts. A traditional Bible study would be held one evening during the week and would usually consist of a teacher sharing with very limited discussion opportunities. While there are some Bible study teachers who facilitate healthy dialogue, some churches no longer have

consistent Bible study as a part of their weekly schedules. In such cases, the mid-week worship service has officially replaced Bible study.

Inconsistency is not the only challenge that many leaders face with bible studies. In some instances, even when Bible study is consistent, involvement from teens and millennials are minimal and infrequent. Arguable this is because some leaders have misused Bible study as another preaching opportunity. When Bible Studies fail to promote healthy dialogue opposing views are not shared in a forum that benefit others.

Bible study plays an integral role in Christian formation. In fact, previously Bible study and discipleship classes went hand in hand. In the past, leaders would spend months walking new believers through the church's teachings. Discipleship/membership classes included both the young and the old growing and learning together. What often emerged from these classes were mentorship opportunities. As new converts learned the church's history and doctrine their passion and commitment to the church and its work increased. Many of today's youth know little about the church's rich history, neither can they recount the church's doctrine. Hence, they often fail to display the same commitment as previous generations.

Challenges Related to Youth Work

The challenges surrounding youth work are multilayered. In some situations, there are youth leaders who lack formal training. In other scenarios there are those who are willing to work but do not have the spiritual maturity to lead with integrity. Additionally, some youth ministry initiatives require a committed team to operate effectively, as youth work can be time-consuming and expensive for the leader.

Youth work therefore can be complicated, as it involves a level of confidentiality, the ability to discern things youth are not willing to easily share, and the ability to coach, counsel, and escalate situations that require attention by a trained professional. Youth work also calls for a level of transparency, authenticity, and relational skills.

In some instances, committed youth workers within the church have burned out, serving in the absence of self-care and regular sabbaticals. The results in such cases are not favorable to the youth leader or to those they minister to. After years of service there is little to no fruit of their labor and no transformation in the lives of those they walked alongside for years.

It is no secret that today's teens in the developed world are exposed to far more and much earlier than the youth of yesterday. Girls in elementary school are experiencing puberty when previously girls were in their teens when puberty occurred. Many teenagers have smart phones, and many children either own a tablet or have easy access to their parents' tablets, computers, or smart phones. Social media platforms allow people to share experiences in real-time via videos and live streaming. Teenagers (even without a salary) and millennials are among the biggest retail consumers of technological gadgets. Youth monopolize social media platforms; thus, this demographic not only has significant purchasing power but they are very influential. They are the future leaders of the Bahamas and thus cannot be ignored.

The church is lagging the world in its efforts to effectively engage teenagers though the use of technology. This is evident by simply watching how the church uses technology in comparison to how technology is used in the schools and the work place.

Failure to utilize technology for the spreading of the gospel makes the possibility to connect with technologically addicted teens even more daunting.

Transportations to youth meetings is another challenge youth leaders face. This can lead to low attendance or inconsistent numbers in attendance. In many instances parents are tired, too busy, or not interested in encouraging or bringing their teens to church-related youth events. Hence a church without a bus offers little to no solution for the youth leader seeking to boost attendance.

Creating and maintaining momentum is another struggle for the youth leader who often cancels youth meetings due to other local church events or events on the church's national calendar. Irregular youth meetings can deter focused teens and parents who prefer consistency.

Additionally, attracting the right number of volunteers to consistently provide their time to mentor youths, and assist in youth events is another challenge that youth ministry faces. In some scenarios there are those who are willing and not capable of working with youth and on the other hand there are those who are capable but not willing to volunteer the time and serve others.

Opposing Views of the Problem

For many there is no issue of discipleship of youth in the Church of God of the Bahamas. From their view, the church is thriving, and youth and millennials are engaged. Consequently, there is a huge difference between how the church is viewed by persons over forty and persons under thirty-five. Those over forty contend that teens and millennials do not exhibit any serious level of interest, commitment to, or love toward the

church. They describe youths as unstable, too easily distracted, hungry for leadership without accountability, and lacking knowledge of church history which allows them to be void of church loyalty. They further argue that millennials are church hoppers, inconsistent in church attendance, irresponsible, sparingly give offerings, and possess little regard for church protocols.

There is some logic to how teens and millennials are viewed. Many youth display some of the behavior mentioned; however, their actions may be a result of deep-rooted issues. Regardless of the root cause of their actions, youth cannot be ignored. They must be engaged. The church cannot negate its responsibility to explore relevant ways to attract, engage, and disciple this age group.

Conclusion

Assisting youth and millennials in their Christian formation is no easy undertaking, but with God's help it is possible. The Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas has served its country well in the past, but if it is to continue to do so, it must start with a renewed strategy and commitment to aid today's youth with their Christian formation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Any research pertaining to Christian formation in youth and millennials should explore the complexities of youth culture in this current era. Additionally, material reviewed in such research must also extend to individuals who work directly with youths such as pastors, youth leaders, and mentors.

Other essential literature to be reviewed includes materials on spirituality, discipleship, and disciplines that aid spiritual formation. Authors such as Walter Hollenweger, Vinson Synon, Simon Chan, and Steven Jack Land have made great contributions to the global conversation surrounding Pentecostal spirituality. However, material relating to Pentecostal spirituality in the Bahamian context is very limited. Nonetheless, a research of this magnitude calls for perusal of classical, academic, and other books on spiritual formation and discipleship.

It is also important to note there are not many academic books on youth work in the Bahamas. Local authors who have written about youth or youth work have done so mainly from a personal experience standpoint. Such books were not very informative considering they were written for a younger audience, primarily to detour teens from making poor decisions.

It is the researcher's view, that the youth culture in the Bahamas while unique, still shares similar patterns to youth cultures in other countries. The media, music, and entertainment business in North America, Jamaica, and the Caribbean, for example,

greatly influence the youth culture in the Bahamas. Thus, there is much to be garnered from studying youth in cultures similar to the Bahamian context.

Today's Youth

Understanding today's youth and the culture within which they exist is a complex mission. Many authors agree that the years from thirteen to thirty-five present a crucial developmental phase for adolescents and young adults, since they encounter a series of firsts during these progressive years. It is during these years that many youth experience their first date, first kiss, first job, first car, first child, marriage, and in many instances their first home. Navigating through these years of so many firsts can be challenging and, in some cases, overwhelming.

Christian Smith and Patricia Snell in *Souls in Transition* point out several things that today's youth contend with. Smith and Snell suggest that today's adolescent undergoes a series of transitions as they move into different phases of growth all towards a general goal of independence or financial stability. They posit that during these years youth are learning to figure out life; whether that be by establishing savings or merely surviving while living from paycheck to paycheck. During these developmental phases generally, many youth are optimistic about their future, caring toward others, and having a respectful appreciation of diversity and individualism. Additionally, for the most part, today's adolescents value education, are more open-minded than previous generations, and have no concerns about the mass consumerism we see today.

Interestingly, despite their indifference toward mass consumerism, Peter Zollo's article, "Wise Up to Teens: Insights into Marketing and Advertising to Teenagers,"

indicates that teens are trendsetters, not just among themselves but also in the wider community.¹ This indicates that although teens may be unemployed they affect economies as they possess purchasing power due to their influence in fashion.

Carver Anderson rightly sums up today's youth culture when he stated young people in our churches and communities are the products of Western rationalism and secularism. They are bombarded and engage daily with various social media outlets. They are exposed to sexual liberation and sexuality issues. They explore secular spirituality (African, Eastern, postmodernist). Their environment exposes them to gangs, drugs, and substance use and misuse. They struggle with faith, the church, and Christianity. Youths often experience mental, emotional, and financial challenges. Additionally, they also are confronted with inequality and oppression, racial and cultural identities.²

Studies have also indicated that many adolescents in this era are less committed and involved in religion in comparison with older adults. This is not surprising since David P. Setran further describes emerging adults as "morally adrift," adventurous, and at times reckless. He pointed out that in some instances they are sexually permissive and promiscuous.³ Setran's description recognizes that there is little adherence to biblical principles regarding sexual purity. Unfortunately, such behavior can have dire impact.

Similarly, Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp in *How People Change* made an interesting observation while working with teenagers. They explained that many

1. Peter Zollo, "Wise Up to Teens: Insights into Marketing and Advertising to Teenagers," 2nd ed. (New York, NY: New Strategist, 1999), 8.

2. Phyllis Thompson, ed., *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership in the Twenty-first Century*, (London, UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013). Kindle 106,107.

3. David P. Setran and Chris A. Keisling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adults: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adults Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), loc. 132.

teenagers did not feel as if they needed the gospel. They correlated this insensitivity to the gospel to how teens were raised, noting that many parents “have successfully raised self-righteous little Pharisees. When they look at themselves, they do not see a sinner in desperate need, so they are not grateful for a Savior.”⁴ Certainly, evangelizing to this mindset presents challenges. Yet evangelism to this generation is critical.

Doug Fields acknowledges an important point by stating we cannot reduce evangelism to a mere program but rather “evangelism is a process of a person modeling his or her transformed life to someone in need of God’s transformational grace.”⁵

The youth culture as described by authors certainly is complex and seemingly indifferent toward organized religion. In fact, Christian Smith posits that today’s youth also tend to be less involved in and committed to social and institutional connections, associations, and activities, according to Anderson further notes that many young people struggle to maintain a state of consistency and stability. He developed six categories that rightly explain their relationship with the church: “in, looking in (church-focused); in, looking out (churched young people with outside influences); out, looking in (unchurched with church influences); out, looking out (unchurched and classed as ‘hard to reach’); in and out, looking in (churched young people involved in ‘contradictory’ lifestyles); out and in, looking out (unchurched with church family affiliations).”⁶

Considering the multiple components that contribute to the composition of today’s youth culture, it is evident that this demographic requires much attention from the

4. Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tipp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2006), Kindle loc. 5.

5. Doug Fields, *Purpose-Driven Youth Ministries: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 104.

6. Thompson, *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership in the Twenty-first Century*, Kindle loc. 107.

church. What is also discernable is that catering to such a unique group of individuals require spiritual maturity, a fair amount of training and the ability to relate to youth as they navigate through each new developmental stage. What was found lacking in some of the research material is practical examples of how to facilitate consistent Christian growth among this demographic.

Spirituality

Spirituality has been topical recently, as persons of all walks of life seek to discern a deeper understanding of life and their own role or purpose in it. Anderson makes a good point by noting that the term *spirituality* in a secular sense can mean something different than we intend it to mean in a Christian context. Hence the term *spirituality* is often used even outside religious circles.

Steven Land in *Pentecostal Spirituality* defines spirituality as the integration of beliefs and practices in the affections which are themselves evoked and expressed by those beliefs and practices.⁷ Simon Chan in *Spiritual Theology* provides a similar definition of spirituality by suggesting in its simplest form spirituality is the “lived reality” or how one really lives out their spiritual theology.”⁸ Both authors are explaining that spirituality is the integration of thoughts, affection, and actions.

Chan makes a brilliant point in his discussion of a comprehensive spirituality that promotes a balanced approach to spiritual growth. He purports that such a pursuit of cultivating one’s spiritual life requires appropriately balancing opposing acts. He

7. Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press 2010), Kindle loc. 8.

8. Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), Kindle loc. 183.

suggests that healthy spiritual growth acknowledges the mystery of grace that brings transformation while recognizing that one must cooperate with God's transforming power in their life.⁹ Certainly for many young adults it can be confusing trying to grasp their role in their own spiritual growth.

Pentecostal Spirituality

The Pentecostal movement traces its roots to the New Testament account of Pentecost as recorded in the book of Acts. Books such as *The Many Faces of Global Pentecostalism* written by Harold Hunter, *The Century of the Holy Spirit* written by Vinson Synan, and *Christian Peoples of the Spirit* edited by Stanley Burgess show traces of Pentecostalism globally around and in some instances before the time of the Azusa Street Revival. Walter Hollenweger in *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments* discusses the theological roots of Pentecostalism, acknowledging the black root, the Catholic root, the evangelical root, the critical root, and the ecumenical root predating the Azusa Street Revival. He asserts William Seymour as being the founder of the movement through the Azusa Street Revivals. Some authors do not support this position, such as Allan Anderson who in *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* discusses traces of the movement globally predating the Azusa Street Revival. Despite the differing viewpoints, many theologians acknowledge that the Welsh Revival in Europe and the Azusa Street Revival in America helped to catapult the resurgence of the modern Pentecostal movement.

Land purports that at the core of Pentecostal spirituality is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life integrating God the Father's word into the beliefs, affections,

9. Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 23.

and actions of the believer unto Christlikeness. Land expresses this as analogous to the interrelations of the Holy Trinity.¹⁰ Land's comments suggest when recognizing an individual's spirituality there should be some correlation in what they believe and how they act. The implication here for Pentecostal churches is to ensure that members understand that their spirituality extends beyond the charismatic expression on a Sunday morning.

Frank Macchia acknowledges this sentiment in *Baptized in the Spirit*, where he states, "What comes through over and over again in their discussions and writings is a certain kind of spiritual experience of an intense, direct, and overwhelming nature centering on the person of Christ which they schematize as 'baptism in the Holy Spirit.'" ¹¹ For many Pentecostals this is the climax of their Christian journey. Notwithstanding the significance of Spirit baptism, divine healing is another central theme among Pentecostals.

The Church of God of Prophecy official website indicates that the church's doctrine acknowledges the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life through the Spirit's indwelling and empowerment to live godly lives.¹² The COGOP under the section of sanctification also emphasizes that sanctification embraces grace plus personal responsibility. This means that local church's educational ministry must articulate and reiterate such information to ensure new converts are being properly informed resulting in healthy spirituality and formation. Dr. S. Steve Kang in a lecture in the Bahamas in 2014 argued that many churches fail to have an efficient and effective education ministry. He further said that many churches teach only to impart but not unto change or

10. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, loc. 651.

11. Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), Kindle loc. 280.

12. Accessed January 24, 2019, <http://cogop.org/about/doctrine/>.

transformation. He stated that the educational ministry of the church must carefully consider not only who is teaching but what is being taught. Additionally, Parrett and Kang in *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful* pointed out that “it should not surprise us that formation is a critical aspect of the telos of the church’s teaching ministry.” After all, 2 Tim 3:16 (English Standard Version) states that “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”¹³ Similarly, David Benner in *Sacred Companions* contends that “Christian spirituality is, of course, something much more specific. Christian spirituality involves working out our existence within the context of the Christian faith and community. More precisely, it is the deep relationship with God that exists when the human spirit is grounded in God’s Spirit.”¹⁴

Kang, Parrot, and Benner all highlight the importance of the church’s teaching ministry. Benner however, elaborates more on the significance of fellowship in Christian maturity.

Leading Youth in the Twenty-first Century

Many authors while addressing youth and youth work in the context of the church often highlight the skill set and giftedness of those who lead. In the COGOP in the Bahamas, many youth workers have not received any specific training via seminary or other academic scholarship in youth leadership.

13. Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 52, 53.

14. David G. Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), Kindle loc. 91-93.

Paul Martin in *Masterpiece* writes about his experience while discipling teens and youth. He argues that the hearts of young adults act as fertile soil for discipleship seeds. He also notes that youth workers should desire to see youth as God sees them, a work of art. Hence, he posits that the youth leader is essentially only assisting in the curating or restoration of the art work, since no teenager arrives as a blank canvas.¹⁵ Youth leaders hold an essential task in the church but more importantly also in the lives of the youth to whom they have been called to disciple. It is therefore crucial that they are not only provided with adequate resources and training to complete their tasks, but also they must be spiritually equipped to aid those they lead to transformation into the image of Christ.

J. Oswald Saunders in *Spiritual Leadership* listed several essentials for leadership including discipline, vision, wisdom, decisiveness, courage, humility, integrity and sincerity, humor, holy anger, patience, friendship, inspirational power, tact and diplomacy. While this list is seemingly extensive for a youth director, because of the intricacies of youth work, youth leaders need to be spiritually equipped to run a healthy youth ministry.¹⁶

Fields in *Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry* points out that “a direct connection exists between a leader’s spiritual vitality and a healthy youth ministry. Today’s youth ministry training often overemphasizes how to do the work of God and neglects how to be a person of God.”¹⁷ Tripp and Lane, authors of *How People Change*, make a similar point when discussing “the gospel gap” that many people seemingly experience. The gospel gap exists when a Christian makes their work their identity. Hence, the youth

15. Paul Martin, *Masterpiece: The Art of Discipling Youth* (San Diego, CA: The Youth Cartel, 2012), Kindle loc. 70.

16. J. Oswald Saunders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1967), Kindle loc. 1470, 1691.

17. Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministries*, 19.

leader must understand the importance of personal Christian formation and must be committed to remaining spiritually healthy.

In *Creating a Discipleship Culture in Your Youth Ministry* by Rod Whitlock, the point is made that churches do not only need youth leaders, but they need youth leaders who knows how to disciple.¹⁸ This suggests that it is a disservice to both the youth and the youth leader when a spiritually unhealthy individual is appointed to lead.

Similarly, some authors point to the personal theology of youth leaders as being critical to what it is they are capable of imparting to youth in their care. What a youth leader believes or is comfortable with will shape the culture of the youth group. Whitlock further supports this notion when he quotes Richard Dunn's view: "The theology of the youth worker is ultimately more important than his or her strategy or methodology—for it will affect everything the youth worker does."¹⁹ Whitlock's explanation of this point further highlighted how the theology of the youth leader will impact what he emphasizes and what he avoids addressing in his youth group. Fields expresses similar sentiments in chapter 1 of the *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry* when he explained his journey from hype to health. Fields personal experience stresses the importance of healthy, wholesome youth leaders and how it shifts the ministry from superficial to something more authentic and meaningful. I concur with Fields posture that healthy youth leaders should be dependent on God, by recognizing his power through personal humility, allowing God's power to work through him or her, and make becoming a person of God more of a priority rather than doing the work of God.

18. Rod Whitlock, *Creating a Discipleship Culture in Your Youth Ministry: 31 Strategies for Making Life-Long Disciples* (Rod Whitlock, 2015), Kindle loc. 711.

19. Whitlock, *Creating a Discipleship Culture*, Kindle loc. 1066.

Beyond Programs to Discipleship

Greg Ogden, author of the *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple*, states “we are mistaken if we think that programs make disciples.”²⁰ Similarly Paul Martin in *Masterpiece* quotes a veteran pastor saying “programs happen when practices don’t.”²¹ Certainly effective youth ministries must have more than programs or events if they are to be transformative. Steran and Keislang in *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adults* posit that “in our attempt to remain relevant and to compete with broader cultural forms, we have often neglected the hard work of teaching, shepherding, and mentoring students in the context of true Christian discipleship, serving instead as purveyors of cheap grace, the cult of niceness, and a God (butler?) who exists merely to meet felt needs.”²² Whitlock puts it this way: “Appealing to the carnal nature of students is a breeding ground for carnal followers.”²³ He further writes that youth ministry leaders are called to be a prophetic voice and not merely called to be event coordinators.²⁴

Fields indicate that it is important to discover the purpose of your youth ministry, and he purports that the five purposes of youth ministry are found in Matt 22:37-40 and Matt 28:19-20. He lists them as worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship. Indeed evangelism and discipleship should be the heartbeat of a youth ministry. Thus youth ministries must have a clear path toward discipleship. Whitlock also agrees that discipleship is critical in youth work. He pointed out that even after “30 years of youth work he feels as if the need to raise disciples is even greater than before.”²⁵

20. Greg Ogden, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple: Eight Sessions for Mentoring and Discipleship*, The Essentials Set (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), Kindle loc. 884.

21. Martin, *Masterpiece*, Kindle loc. 337.

22. Steran and Keislang, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adults*, Kindle loc. 25.

23. Whitlock, *Creating a Discipleship Culture*, Kindle loc. 263.

24. Whitlock, *Creating a Discipleship Culture*, Kindle loc. 1026.

25. Whitlock, *Creating a Discipleship Culture*, Kindle loc. 445.

Certainly, youth ministries must seek to make those who walk through their program Christ imitators from inside out.

For many youths, their Christian journey starts and ends with a head and not heart conversion to Christianity. Beyond attending youth events and reading their Bibles and praying occasionally they never fully transition to an integrated spirituality that mirrors Jesus Christ. Whitlock makes a good point when he noted that too often the church recognizes and celebrates the new convert as opposed to equally focusing and celebrating converts who transition into disciples, making further disciples. This celebration that new converts receive is also what fuels the false notion that with salvation being free there is no responsibility to count the cost of what is required to faithfully follow Jesus. Francis Chan in *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* urges readers to count the cost. Similarly, Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship* also discusses how the theology of cheap grace has erred, with the result that many do not fully appreciate the cost of discipleship. For many the terms *Christian* and *disciple* are synonyms. Yet there are many authors who suggest there is a difference.

Ogden in *Essential Guide of Becoming a Disciple* also acknowledges that there is a misconception that one can be a Christian without being a disciple. He purports that this perception is unbiblical and occurs when the gospel is proclaimed to many emphasizing the benefits one receives and not the responsibility of submitting one's free will to follow Jesus.

Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship* states that discipleship means obeying Christ. Hence for him the call to Christianity is a call to discipleship. Bonhoeffer follows this up with this position by pointing out that "the response of the disciples is an act of

obedience, not a confession of faith in Jesus.”²⁶ Bonhoeffer further explains that the disciple rejects his old life, his false sense of security only to follow and obey Jesus completely surrendered. Bonhoeffer further explains that the commitment of discipleship is unto death, which can be similar to the early disciples. Just as Jesus dies, the disciple cannot expect a greater leniency than his master.

Similarly, Francis Chan’s definition of a disciple in *Multiply* describes a disciple as an apprentice. He further argues that to be a Christian means to be a follower of Christ and as a disciple one must also multiply and disciple others as Christ did. He posits that making disciples is all about seeing people transformed by the power of God’s Word.²⁷

J. Dwight Pentecost in *Design for Discipleship* also notes that many people are not clear on what a disciple is. He describes a disciple as “a learner, a pupil, a scholar, one who comes to be taught.”²⁸ However, he too acknowledges that discipleship involves renunciation of personal ambitions and requires identification of Jesus’ death. For Pentecost “a true disciple is one who has a love for the person of Christ, confidence in the word of Christ and is completely committed to Christ in service and in obedience.”²⁹ Pentecost further makes an alarming claim of discipleship that goes against the way most Christians are comfortable viewing stewardship in light of the new prosperity gospel. He posits that not only does a disciple deny himself daily he also acknowledges fully that his possessions are not really his and that he is merely a steward of God’s property. Thus, to use even a small portion for selfish gain without God’s permission would be some sort of

26. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1948), Kindle loc. 785.

27. Francis Chan, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook 2012), 47.

28. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship: Discovering God’s Blueprint for the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1996), 10.

29. Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship*, 11.

embezzlement. Such a perspective emphasizes the life of servanthood required from a disciple.

The youth leader then ought to be nothing less than a fruitful servant. His goal should not be to merely entertain youth or introduce them to Christ, but his end goal should be to disciple them. Francis Chan in *Crazy Love* describes churchgoers who do not follow Jesus wholeheartedly as lukewarm people and not Christians. He further argues that lukewarm people are concerned with playing it safe.³⁰ Such a definition highlights the stark difference from conversion to discipleship. Hence for the church and particularly youth leaders assisting youth into such a Christian formation that reflects discipleship is beyond a mere walk in the park.

Youth leaders must then be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led if they are to aid others in their spiritual formation. Hype programming is not enough. Discernment and holy listening must be exercised as leaders journey alongside with youth in their spiritual development. In fact, Fields posits that beyond youth programs, if youth are to maintain their faith they need to develop consistent spiritual growth habits, otherwise termed spiritual disciplines.³¹

The Role of Spiritual Disciplines in Christian Formation

Many theologians have opposing views about the promotion of spiritual disciplines. Some authors argue that spiritual disciplines focus too much on actions and do not emphasize the mystery of God's work in the hearts of men. Other theologians are convinced that spiritual disciplines are critical in discipleship. Robert Mulholland poses

30. Francis Chan, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2013), 78.

31. Fields, *Purpose-Driven Youth Ministries*, 159.

an interesting perspective by stating “somewhere between the extremes of avoidance of discipline and the imprisonment of discipline is the holistic practice of balanced spiritual disciplines that become a means of God’s grace to shape us in the image of Christ for others.”³²

Dallas Willard in *The Kingdom Life* argues that disciplines are necessary practices for disciples. He further asserts that discipline is an activity within our power that enables us to accomplish what we cannot do by direct effort.³³ Using this definition he builds his argument by illustrating the importance of discipline or practice in perfecting one’s skill as a musician or a plumber. He summed up his personal experience with spiritual disciplines by stating that “correct practice of spiritual disciplines, exercises, or habits is that they are more related to wisdom than to righteousness, meaning that they don’t earn any ‘brownie points’ with God. In other words, I don’t earn God’s favor or blessing through the doing of a discipline. They are simply means to an end. The end: spending time before God in a particular practice, whereby I can learn to be like Him in character and action.”³⁴

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun in *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* points out that spiritual habits done for the wrong motives incapacitate one’s transformation. She further points out that “it is not spiritual disciplines per se that transform us into the likeness of Christ. Without the work of God’s Spirit within, practices guarantee nothing.”³⁵ Disciplines done for the wrong reasons sabotage transformation and numb us toward God and the truth.

32. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL : InterVarsity Press), Kindle loc. 48.

33. Dallas Willard, *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation Location* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), loc. 1566.

34. Willard, *Kingdom Life*, loc. 1550.

35. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), Kindle loc. 403.

Similarly, Kyle David Bennet in *Practices of Love* explained how often Christians want to participate in spiritual disciplines because they want a spiritual lift or shift in their emotional state. He suggests that that such behavior can lead to spiritual junkies in search for spiritual heroin.³⁶

Krsiten Dedee Johnson sums up both sides of the argument in her article in *Christianity Today International*. In the article she points out that in some instances spiritual disciplines focus too heavily on the vertical relationship of God and man while risking transference to our relationships with our neighbors. Using the analogy of spiritual disciplines to a soccer match, she brilliantly demonstrated that sometimes what is learned at soccer practice does not translate to successful games on the playing field. Similarly, unless Christians allow their love of God to be integrated in their everyday actions, then spiritual disciplines will not have aided their true Christian formation.³⁷

Despite the many arguments that highlight the woes of spiritual discipline in Christian formation, there are many authors who not only acknowledge the down side of spiritual disciplines but also promote such practices for anyone wishing to be an imitator of Christ. In fact, Leslie Hardin, author of *The Spirituality of Jesus*, writes that the development of Christian spirituality “is a cooperative involving God’s gift of grace and our faithful response intermingled and working together producing transformation, wholeness and life with God.”³⁸ He further posits that Jesus himself grew spiritually and that throughout his life we see him practice regular habits that afforded the opportunity

36. Kyle David Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017), 1.

37. Kristen Deede Johnson, “Are We Missing the Point of Spiritual Disciplines?”, *Christianity Today*, August 18, 2017, accessed January 25, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/september/are-we-missing-point-of-spiritual-disciplines.html> 23/11/2018.

38. Leslie T. Hardin, *The Spirituality of Jesus* (Leslie Hardin, 2009), 19.

for the Spirit to flow through him.³⁹ Referencing Jesus' own spirituality, Hardin highlights various spiritual disciplines that Jesus modeled: Prayer and solitude, casting down temptation, Scripture reading and memorization, corporate worship, submission, simplicity, care for the oppressed, fellowship meals, and evangelism and proclamation.

Gordon McDonald in *Ordering Your Private World* wrote, "If my private world is in order, it will be because I regularly choose to enlarge the spiritual center of my life."⁴⁰ McDonald postulates that it is important for Christians to allocate time and cultivate their (inner) spiritual gardens. He argued that there are serious consequences when our spiritual center goes undisciplined. He too referenced Jesus' practices of spiritual disciplines and questioned if we have now cheapened the value of time devoted to detaching from our busy schedules to cultivate one's spiritual garden.

Ogden makes an argument when he points out that "many of us have financial plans, educational plans, career plans and health plans, but what about a spiritual growth plan? A spiritual growth plan is our training regimen. A plan harnesses our passion into practices. We populate our spiritual growth plan with what are called spiritual disciplines."⁴¹ He further suggests that spiritual disciplines help to connect our hearts to God's Word, thus fostering obedience in our lives.

The question then arises what types of disciplines are necessary for spiritual growth. While some authors oppose the concept of spiritual disciplines as a means to spiritual growth many theologians agree that prayer, Bible study, service, and rest are requirements of spiritual maturity and longevity.

39. Hardin, *Spirituality of Jesus*, 15-16.

40. Gordon McDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984), loc. 1911.

41. Ogden, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple*, Kindle loc. 748.

Among the various disciplines that different authors recommend there is hardly a list that does not include worship/thanksgiving, prayer, Scripture reading, detachment, silence and solitude, and Sabbath observance. Though there are many other disciplines a few will be addressed in this chapter as primary disciplines in Christian formation.

Prayer

Almost all discipleship and spiritual formation books highlight the importance of prayer. Rod Whitlock in *Creating a Discipleship Culture* also suggests including times of prayer in youth ministry activities to develop their core. Prayer is essentially communication with God. J. Oswald Sanders describes prayer as the most ancient, most universal, and most intensive expression of the religious instinct. Prayer is indeed the Christian's vital breath and native air.⁴² Sanders thus stressed the importance of prayer in Christian vitality.

Even books that postulate a perspective of spiritual growth other than spiritual disciplines often still stress the importance of prayer in discipleship. Dallas Willard in *The Divine Conspiracy* states that "prayer, it is rightly said, is the method of genuine theological research, the method of understanding what and who God is. God is spirit and exists at the level of reality where the human heart, or spirit, also exists, serving as the foundation and source of our visible life it is there that the individual meets with God 'in spirit and in truth.'"⁴³

42. J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence For Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), Kindle loc. 1856-1868.

43. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1998), Kindle 214.

In *Rooted*, the author establishes that prayer is critical to developing healthy roots that produce lasting fruit.⁴⁴ He further points out that prayer is important in helping people become rooted in God's love as well, as it is in prayer God reveals to us certain things.

Ruth Harley Barton in *Sacred Rhythms* points out that prayer is critical in Christian formation. She notes that prayer allows for deeper intimacy with God. She further suggests that different spiritual disciplines are different ways of praying; hence all life is prayer. She posits that self-examination, lectio divina, silence, and solitude are all spiritual disciplines connected to prayer.⁴⁵ Communication is critical to any relationship; hence it is no secret that prayer is essential in Christian formation.

Studying the Scriptures

Study of the Word of God is another spiritual discipline that is important in discipleship. Calhoun describes Bible study as an activity that includes not only engaging the Scripture but also understanding it and applying it to every area of one's life. The study of the Scripture then starts out with knowledge but should move one to implementation in action. Such an approach to Bible study is indeed transformative.⁴⁶ Pentecost in *Design for Discipleship* noted that many Christians, when asked if they believe the Word of God, would affirm that they do believe the Scriptures' integrity and infallibility, yet if these same persons were asked if they were living by the Word of God they would admit they are not. He further argues that acknowledging the authority alone

44. Banning Liebscher, *Rooted: The Hidden Place Where God Develops You* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2016), loc. 1439.

45. Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 75.

46. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, Kindle loc. 3923.

of the Bible but failing to follow same does not make one a disciple.⁴⁷ Discipleship then calls for activation of what is revealed to us as when we read the Bible.

In Calhoun's book she points out several ways one can engage the Scriptures: for example, devotional reading, memorizing Scripture, and meditation. Youth leaders can easily cultivate an environment of reading and memorizing the Scripture in youth gatherings. Mulholland provides an interesting perspective on how many engage biblical or spiritual readings. He noted that in

spiritual reading the text becomes a means of grace through which we encounter the God who has spoken us forth into being and who continues to speak to us to shape us in the image of Christ for others. In brief, the text opens us to God's control of our lives for God's purposes. This is a radical reversal of the dynamics of an informational culture in which our possession and use of information enables us to impose our purposes on the world of our activities.⁴⁸

Mulholland also stresses another interesting point as it relates to *lectio divina*, also known as spiritual reading. He points out that typically this approach to the Scripture has four main elements: *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, *contemplatio*.⁴⁹ Yet considering today's culture he adds two more elements, one at the beginning, *silencio*, and one at the end, *incarnation*. The additional elements add a relevant approach to Scripture reading for teens and millennials who are constantly bombarded with information on social media platforms.

In addition to the influx of information that youth face, there is much pressure for them to be driven and competitive in the current fast-paced culture. A consistent fast-paced life often lacks sustainability and usually leads to burning out. Among all spiritual practices that promote spiritual growth and longevity are the practices that include

47. Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship*.

48. Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, Kindle 128, loc. 1726.

49. Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, Kindle 129, loc. 1764.

detachment, solitude, contemplation, and rest. These disciplines help to maintain healthy perspectives and a deeper sense of self-realization as well as Christian reflection and healthy rhythms in the Christian life.

Detachment

Calhoun describes detachment as “replacing the attachment to (1) idolatrous relationships and (2) self-serving goals and agendas for success, money, power, ego, productivity and image with wholehearted attachment to and trust in God alone.”⁵⁰ In light of materialism and secularism, individuals who desire to grow more like Christ must be willing to renounce worldly values and disconnect from everything that can distract them from desiring and knowing God.⁵¹ Calhoun puts it this way: “Transformation into Christlikeness requires detachment from whatever keeps us from returning to and resting in God, who is our treasure and our core.”⁵² Such a detachment is not an option but is necessary for the Christian life. Calhoun also suggests that becoming more detached from things allows for more attachment to Jesus, which also helps us trust God more and to serve others better as we grasp new awareness of sharing and giving.

Silence and Solitude

Similarly, silence, solitude, and detachment go hand in hand. McDonald points out the reality of today’s noisiness and busyness:

Our worlds are filled with the noise of endless music, chatter, and busy schedules. In most homes there is a stereo in almost every room, in every car, in each office, in the elevator. When I dial a friend at his office I am offered music over the

50. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 95, Kindle loc. 1910.

51. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 96, Kindle loc. 1957.

52. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 251, Kindle loc. 5026.

phone until he comes to answer my call. There are cell phones with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony theme for a ring, Walkmans with mega-bass, and MP3s, all invading the mind with noise. Pretty noise, most of the time. But nevertheless noise. With the intrusion of so much noise, when can we withdraw and monitor the still, small voice of God?⁵³

Times have changed since McDonald's book was last updated in 2003, and while many teenagers have no idea what a stereo or a Walkman looks, like many have smart phones and tablets that keep them preoccupied all the time. Silence and solitude in today's culture is against the norm as endless advertising campaigns seek to get the attention of the masses. Yet if there was ever a generation that needed silence and solitude it is this one, as many individuals experience anxiety or brain clutter due to information overload.

Thus, Thomas à Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ* urged readers to seek out a time to think about God's benefit as we search one's own conscience. Similarly, Calhoun describes solitude as scheduling time that is distraction-free and interruption-free to be with God. Barton defines solitude as creating space for God. Barton suggests that solitude involves unplugging and listening.⁵⁴ The unplugging is an important point for teens who are almost always connected to an electronic device. Solitude allows for self-reflection and meditation. It sharpens one's holy listening first to the God and then to others. Calhoun also points out that in times of solitude one can experience the joy of God's presence as well as low moments when his presence feels withdrawn. Considering the volatile world we live in, it is important for youth to know how to deal with both the highs and lows of life. Using Jacob's life (Gen 32:24-32), Mulholland explained how Jacob sought solitude in a pivotal point of his life. He describes solitude then as a place where we can be most true to ourselves and most transparent in the presence of our God.

53. McDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, loc. 214-2018.

54. Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 29.

Willard explains that solitude calls for both an internal decision and an external action. He further notes that solitude challenges us to focus on being rather than doing.⁵⁵ Stephen Macchia stated the benefits of silence and solitude eloquently: “time alone with God that’s life-giving, life-sustaining, life-redeeming and life-transforming.”⁵⁶

Sabbath

Sabbath rest is perhaps the most unpracticed discipline in today’s competitive and busy world. Calhoun points out how in today’s fast-paced world slowing down to rest seems somewhat abnormal and weekends can be lost in activity. Yet she suggests by practicing the rhythm of Sabbath rest we acknowledge our limits and that Christ can attend to all our concerns as we embrace his rest. For many Christians entering in God’s rest can be challenging. Family requirements, school, personal ambition, or ministry requirements coupled with the fact that today’s culture often equate business with a false sense of importance makes it even more difficult for Christians to embrace a healthy work-rest rhythm. Mark Buchanan in *The Rest of God* explains Sabbath as “both a day and an attitude to nurture such stillness. It is both time on a calendar and a disposition of the heart. It is a day we enter, but just as much a way we see. Sabbath imparts the rest of God—actual physical, mental, spiritual rest, but also the rest of God—the things of God’s nature and presence we miss in our busyness.”⁵⁷

Dan Allender in *Sabbath* identifies three main elements of Sabbath rest. First, the Sabbath is not merely a good idea; it is one of the Ten Commandments. Second, the

55. Willard, *The Kingdom Life*, loc. 1820.

56. Stephen Macchia, *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way* (Downers Grove, IL : InterVarsity Press, 2012), loc. 1334.

57. Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God: Restoring your Soul by Sabbath Rest* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), Kindle loc. 271.

Sabbath is a day of delight for humankind. Third, the Sabbath is a feast day that remembers our leisure in Eden and anticipates our play in the new heavens and earth.⁵⁸

On the other side, in *Practices of Love* Bennett points out that there are also ways to falsely perceive rest, otherwise known as malformed resting, which results in being lazy or to the other extreme working away from the office but on work-related projects. He further warned how the Sabbath is often abused as a day we get to enjoy whatever we want, be it football or family and friends. He posits rather that Saturday observance should allow for meditation with others, reflection of God in our lives, and a day of rest for our employees as well.⁵⁹

Certainly, many authors see the value of entering the rest of Sabbath and for an array of reasons. Revitalization and renewal are key to Christian perseverance. Well-rested soldiers tend to be more alert than tired ones. One can never underestimate the importance of rest on the spirit and body. Even Jesus himself rested. Bennet expresses it poignantly by stating that a “Sabbath reflection can help us prepare our head, hearts and hands for the week.”

Worship/Celebration

Worship/celebration (singing praises or expressions of gratitude), whether private or corporate, is important in discipleship. Worship is fundamental to all other disciplines, for it is in worship that we chose to make God a priority. Calhoun states that true worship occurs when we put God first in our lives. She further posits that “discipline, willpower, giftedness and going to church can be good things. But they do not guarantee

58. Dan Allender, *Sabbath: The Ancient Practices*, Ancient Practices (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), Kindle ed. 5-6.

59. Bennett, *Practices of Love*, 147-65.

transformation. Transformation comes through valuing God above all else.”⁶⁰ Corporate worship allows for encouragement, correction in love, and genuine fellowship. Corporate worship also grants one opportunity to share of God’s goodness through testimonies as well as bear each other’s burdens in prayer.

Private worship can be blissful as it allows people to design their own format for pursuing Christ. Mulholland contends that worship is how we recover our focus and return to our center. The quality and consistency of our worship will determine how well we are able to live Christ-centered lives in the world. If this is true, then Christian formation is exhibited by authentic worship to the God the father, and also our interaction with his creation.

Conclusion

The spiritual disciplines mentioned already do not represent an exhaustive list. Journaling and acts of service are other disciplines that help in our Christian formation. While we cannot pursue all these disciplines in detail, what comes to light after reviewing various pieces of literature on Christian formation and discipleship of youth and millennials is that there is no one template that works for all adolescents and millennials. Youth leaders need to be spiritually equipped and spiritually healthy if they are to disciple teens and youth. Youth ministry must be more than programs. At the core of discipleship is love: love of God and love of people. Love of God is what motivates one to be a Jesus follower and to disciple others. The process of discipleship takes time and commitment. A critical ingredient to Christian formation is education of God’s Word, prayer, and the development of new habits that help one take off the old man and

60. Calhoun, *Handbook of Spiritual Disciplines*, 45, loc. 988.

embrace a new life in Christ. Together with the mystery of grace that is extended to one through the work of the cross, transformation takes place and continues throughout life as one daily denies self and matures into a spirituality that is holistic, involving a healthy integration of head, heart, and hands.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Throughout the Holy Scriptures there are many references to support Christian formation and discipleship. This chapter will discuss the various theological and biblical principles that support Christian formation and the use of spiritual disciplines in aiding Christian growth and discipleship.

After the fall of man God sent his son, as recorded in John 3:16-17, to redeem man back to him. Jesus Christ came to earth, experienced humanity, and conquered sin, death, and the grave, becoming the ransom for all. Second Peter 2:24 explains Jesus' work on the cross when it states, "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; he "redeemed all mankind."¹

The four Gospels capture Jesus' spirituality, helping us to better understand what formation to his likeness looks like. Matthew portrays Jesus as the Messiah, the fulfillment of prophecy. Mark highlighted him as the suffering servant and Son of God. Luke identifies him as the Savior of the world, and John explains Christ as the Son of God, the Word of God.

Knowing that his time on earth would be limited, Jesus selected twelve men whom he mentored and trained. They saw him heal the sick, cast out demons, perform many other miracles, and even express deep emotion when he wept for Lazarus. They were close enough to witness his humanity, and some of them witnessed his

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.

transfiguration. While one eventually betrayed him, many went on to spread the gospel far beyond Jerusalem.

Both the Old and New Testaments provide examples of other men and women whose spirituality can be better understood by closely examining their lives. Paul in his letters to the various churches offers great insight into what is required of a disciple of Christ. Paul's writings also include several instructions that support the practices of spiritual disciplines.

The Birthplace of Christian Formation

Arguably, the birthplace of Christian formation stems from the creation story. In Gen 1 God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."² While some authors disagree as to whether the terminology "let us" denotes the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) or other heavenly beings, it is the researcher's view that "let us" denotes the Trinity. The Gospel of John also establishes Jesus' existence from the beginning of time when he wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."³ Similar to the Trinity, humans are multidimensional, consisting of body, spirit, and soul. Humans are sophisticated, intellectual beings with the capacity to enjoy

2. Gen 1:26-27.

3. John 1:1-3.

long-term, meaningful relationships and rationalize and make personal decisions to do good or evil. This is the quintessential distinction of humanity within God's creation.⁴ Their ability to conceptualize is loftier than that of the other animals created, possessing a uniqueness that is not comparable to anything else.

The distinctive qualities of humans and the directives God gives to man after being created⁵ suggest that God designed man to be superior to the rest of his creation. This is evident by the fact that God gave man dominion over some of it. Diane Chandler in *Christian Spiritual Formation* posits that God made humans in his image as an intentional and creative demonstration of his love.⁶ Later in the creation story, God is walking in the Garden of Eden calling out to the man he created, but Adam and Eve hid from him.⁷ This text suggested that God desired to have fellowship with his creation. However, because of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God they hid from him and were eventually banned from the garden. Chandler further posits, "Whereas the Imago Dei was corrupted in the fall of humanity (Gen 3), the image was renewed through Christ's redemption."⁸ Building on Chandler's argument, when one is renewed through Christ, one is essentially restored to the original design and nature before the fall.

Colossians 3:15-22 sums it up perfectly by stating,

the Son is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over-all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the

4. James R. Estep and Jonathon H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), Kindle P10 loc. 150.

5. Gen 1:28.

6. Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 28, Kindle loc. 326.

7. Gen 3:8-10.

8. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation*, 38, Kindle loc. 510.

supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

Chandler therefore states it correctly when she said, "Christ provided the restoration of the image that was lost in the Garden and foreshadowed an eternal glory yet to come. We are to demonstrate the life of Christ through godly character, and ethical living in holistic tandem."⁹ Christian formation thus involves a continuous pursuit, as each day disciples of Christ disrobe themselves of sin and clothe themselves in Christ's righteousness. This process occurs as Christians cooperate with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit convicts the believer of Jesus' work on the cross, restoring the believer back to the Father. Thus, the Trinity is very present in Christian formation. The transformation the unbeliever undergoes becomes evident to all, as the believer pursues holistic transformation even unto death.

Jesus' time on earth provides an excellent model of a life that pleases the Father. Jesus' life illustrates that it is possible to overcome temptation and trial because he was triumphant over the devices of the enemy. The writer of Heb 4:14-15 explains it this way: "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are yet he did not sin." Since Jesus overcame temptation, so can the believer with his help. Therefore, since spirituality in its simplest

9. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation*, 38, Kindle loc. 531.

form incorporates beliefs, emotions, and actions. Transformation to Christ's image is somewhat intrinsic for true disciples of Christ.

The Spirituality of Jesus

The pursuit of formation to Christ-likeness embraces a deeper understanding of Jesus' spirituality. The four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, provide much insight into how Jesus conducted his life on earth. Luke 4 indicates that after being tempted in the wilderness for forty days and nights, Jesus' public ministry was about to begin.¹⁰ One of the first things we understand from Jesus was that he did not approach ministry alone. But why would Jesus the Christ invite men to walk alongside him as he was about to engage public ministry? Certainly, he had the power to do ministry alone. Francis Chan in *Multiply Disciples Making Disciples* makes an important point about discipleship when he pointed out that "disciples in Jesus' day would follow their rabbi wherever they went, learning from the rabbi's teaching and being trained to do as the rabbi did."¹¹ Chan's point indicates that Jesus' calling of the Twelve was deliberate; it was an intentional act of choosing whom he wanted to disciple.

Matthew 4:18-22 sheds light on the first group of men Jesus called to be his disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Later in Mark 2:10 Jesus calls Levi the tax collector. In fact, Mark 3:12-14 explains Jesus' motives by stating, "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach."¹² Dwight

10. Luke 4:2-10.

11. Francis Chan, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012), 16.

12. Mark 3:12-14.

Pentecost further summarizes Jesus' reason for calling the disciples by stating that "the ministry of Jesus Christ begins with the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John to be his disciples and it closed with the commission given to those whom he called His disciples to go into all the world to make disciples of all nation."¹³ Jesus called men to walk alongside him as he ministered but also to bear witness of his ministry when he departed. There are therefore two major implications of Jesus' approach to ministry with his disciples. First, by choosing a group of men to walk alongside him Jesus is demonstrating the importance of fellowship and mentorship. Second, the fact that his purpose of calling them ended with instructions to further the gospel demonstrates the importance of continuity and succession planning.

What is also unique about Jesus' disciples is the diversity of the group of men whom he chose. Jesus chose men of different occupations, social classes, and temperament. The diversity among the disciples suggests from the onset Jesus wanted to establish that discipleship was not for a special social class but for whosoever was willing to answer the call: the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he demonstrated a fundamental discipline of discipleship, obedience. Jesus served his Father faithfully. His obedience was demonstrated through his submission to the Father's will. Jesus illustrated how important his Father's will was to him in John 4 when he made his way through Samaria to meet the woman at the well. The disciples offered him something to eat in Samaria, suspecting that he should be hungry, and his response demonstrated where his priority was. Jesus answered the disciples by saying in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who

13. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship: Discovering God's Blueprint for the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1996), 9.

sent me and to finish His work.” This statement indicated how important the Father’s will was to Jesus since he compared food, which is a vital requirement of life, with him doing the will of his Father.

In John 6:35 Jesus identifies himself as the “bread of life.” Jesus was acknowledging his role in redemption; he was also stating that as essential as bread is to the physical life so is he to the spiritual life. However, Jesus’ claim as bread of life was also tied to his submission to the Father.

Jesus echoes his purpose and commitment again in Luke 6 when he says, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”¹⁴ Jesus’ obedience to God was resolute even in tough times. In the garden of Gethsemane, knowing what awaited ahead, Jesus prayed earnestly saying, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”¹⁵ Jesus nonetheless completed his mission, submitting to the pain of the cross in obedience to his Father’s will.

Similarly, today’s disciple of Christ should be obedient to God even unto death. Jesus’ disciples except for Judas all demonstrated a relentless commitment to God unto demise. They had witnessed firsthand full obedience to the Father; when faced with their own opportunities to serve God faithfully, they endured persecution for Christ’s sake.

The life of Jesus also demonstrates humility. Paul in Phil 2 eloquently explains Christ’s humility and the humility Christ’s disciples should exhibit when he wrote, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his

14. John 6:38.

15. Luke 22:42.

own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross!”¹⁶ In many instances Christians and nonbelievers alike have no issues submitting and serving those in authority. However, Jesus, who was equivalent to God, came to earth as his Father’s servant. Jesus understood exactly what his role as a servant entailed because in Matt 20:28 he stated, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”¹⁷

Jesus later demonstrated the principle of servant leadership to his disciples when he offered to wash his disciples’ feet in John 13. Initially, Peter refused, but after Jesus told him that it was a symbol of true fellowship Peter quickly submitted. Jesus more thoroughly explained the significance of his action when he said, “Do you understand what I have done for you?” “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”¹⁸ Jesus, as he was preparing to leave the disciples, is seen challenging the disciples’ perspective of leadership. He was demonstrating that leadership requires service not just to those in authority but also to peers and certainly to those we lead.

Despite his divinity, Jesus’ humanity acknowledged the importance of a disciplined life. Throughout his ministry we see Jesus exercising various spiritual

16. Phil 2:5-11.

17. Matt 20:28.

18. John 13:12-17.

disciplines. One spiritual discipline that Jesus is noted to have practiced often is prayer. Jesus prayed both privately and publicly, as he did before raising Lazarus from the dead. The Scripture records Jesus looking up and saying, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”¹⁹ The fact that Jesus prayed before this miracle, and in his prayer he mentioned that it was for the benefit of the witnesses present, suggests that there are times in the disciple’s life that they would have to pray publicly for the sake of the witnesses present.

The Scriptures also record moments when Jesus paused from fellowship and spent time in solitude to pray. In Mark 6:45-47 it states that “immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.”²⁰ If Jesus exercised detachment, even from his disciples, for solitude and prayer, how much more should those who want to be his disciples be willing to detach themselves from worldly amenities and entertainment to pray?

In Luke 6:12-14 Jesus is depicted praying for guidance in conjunction with the selection of the disciples. Later, in John 17, Jesus prays for the disciples and those who would come to him through the disciples’ ministry.²¹ Jesus did not only pray for those who meant him well; he also prayed for his enemies. In Matt 5:45 Jesus taught the multitude to pray for those who persecute them. In Luke 22:34 Jesus prayed for his own persecutors: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

19. John 11:41-42.

20. Mark 6:45-47.

21. John 17:16-25.

Although John describes Jesus as the “word which became flesh and dwelt among us,”²² throughout the Synoptic Gospels there is record of Jesus reading or quoting Scriptures. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness he quoted the Scriptures to rebuke the devil.²³ Early in his public ministry Jesus went into the temple and read the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. In Luke 4 during the Sermon on the Mount Jesus referenced Scripture demonstrating how knowledgeable he was about his Father’s Word. When he was upset with how the Jews were using the temple, Jesus referenced Jer 7:11 when he said, “It is written, ‘my house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a den of robbers.”²⁴

On several occasions throughout Jesus’ ministry he is seen interacting with different social classes and ethnic groups. Hardin points out “the striking thing about Jesus’ discipline of meal sharing was that he invited everyone to the table. The Gospels portray him sharing meals with Pharisees, tax collectors, sinners and his disciples”²⁵ Jesus understood that his ministry was to those who were broken, lost, in bondage, and spiritually blind. It was important that he took deliverance, healing, and restoration to people with these conditions.

While the Scriptures illustrate that some of the spiritual disciplines Jesus exercised were popular among other Jewish leaders, what set him apart were his motives. Jesus cautioned his disciples to have the right motives toward spiritual disciplines when he said in Matt 6:5, “and when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell

22. John 1:1-2.

23. Matt 4:1-11.

24. Luke 4:16-17,

25. Leslie T. Hardin, *The Spirituality of Jesus: Nine Disciplines Christ Modeled for Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2009), 139.

you, they have received their reward in full.”²⁶ Later in Matt 6 he talked about wrong motives and behavior during fasting. “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full, but when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father.”²⁷ If Jesus did not see any value in fasting or praying he would have never used “when you” as a prefix to his comments. The use of the words “when you” suggest that these spiritual disciplines were expected to be part of the disciple’s life. Similarly, disciples of Christ today must have the right mindset and affection when practicing spiritual disciplines.

Jesus’ ministry was founded upon love. He exuded love, compassion, and forgiveness as qualities that his disciples should emulate. His motives were not self-centered, and there was a direct correlation between Jesus’ actions and his heart. Any spiritual discipline done void of Christ’s affections does not attain the desired outcome.

Biblical Support for Discipleship

In Matt 28 Jesus tell his disciples, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”²⁸ As Chan points out, the commandment to go and make disciples was not a commandment given to pastors; rather this

26. Matt 6:5.

27. Matt 6:16-18.

28. Matt 28:19-20.

commandment was given to common men who had been disciplined by Jesus himself.²⁹

Similarly, discipleship today is not restricted to church leaders only. Instead every disciple, irrespective of title, has the responsibility to participate in discipleship.

Paul, in 2 Cor 5, explains how important discipleship should be to the believer when he stated,

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.³⁰

Walter A. Henrichsen sides with Paul when he declared that “making disciples begins with evangelism.”³¹ Paul, in this text, also alludes to the importance of having a good heart and how Christ’s love is the empowering force behind true discipleship. Mark Dever makes a good summation on how intertwined the disciple’s love and obedience to God is in the discipling of others when he suggests that there is no separation between being a disciple and discipling others because our obedience to God is tied to our love. He further argues that because of our love for God we will follow his commandment to the other disciples which was to go out and make disciples in all nations.³² Dever is therefore suggesting that one cannot be a true disciple of Christ and not share his passion to save the lost. All lost souls matter to Jesus, and Paul understood. This is why Paul wrote in 1 Cor 9,

29. Chan, *Multiply*, 29.

30. 2 Cor 5:11-15.

31. Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born: Helping Others Grow to Maturity in Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1974), Kindle loc. 670.

32. Mark Dever, *Discipling Others to Follow Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 17.

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.³³

The theological implications for all disciples today were delineated perfectly by Leroy Elms, who argues that “in making disciples, we should not select only those who are like us in temperament and personality. Nor should we choose only those who act in a certain way that we find agreeable to our personal lives and acceptance standards. It would be a good idea to have some ‘roughnecks’ on the team as well as some scholars and quiet types.”³⁴ Greg Ogden also acknowledges the unique power of Christian discipleship when he said, “Christianity has shown an amazing capacity to adapt to every culture and shift its center without changing its core message.”³⁵ Perhaps the significance of Christian discipleship lies in the Spirit's work behind the scenes in the hearts of men convicting them of sin, contextualizing the good news of the cross.

Nonetheless, Dever provides an excellent description of Christian discipleship as “deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ. Discipleship is the term I use to describe our own following Christ.”³⁶ Here Dever is explaining that there is no separation between following Christ and doing good things that encourage others to follow Christ. This is the essence of Christian spirituality, and it

33. 1 Cor 9:20-23.

34. Leroy Elms, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 29, loc. 338.

35. Greg Ogden, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), Kindle loc. 443.

36 Dever, *Discipling Others to Follow Christ*, 12, loc. 130.

mirrors the way Jesus taught his disciples. Luke 6:40 puts it this way: “The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.”³⁷ As the disciple becomes more like Christ his old nature disappears as the Spirit renews new thoughts, affections, and actions in him.

The Biblical Requirements of Disciples

Francis Chan posits that the call to discipleship starts with repentance.³⁸ He further highlights that even before Jesus called his first disciples his message was that of repentance.³⁹ The term “repentance” indicates that there is a turn away from or a denunciation of what was previously done. The first disciples turned away from their previous livelihood for Christ’s sake. Such a change of focus and priority does not come lightly.

Not only is repentance necessary for disciples; self-denial is also required. The disciples, when they answered the call to follow Jesus, simultaneously embrace a lifestyle of self-denial. In Luke 9 Jesus makes it clear that whoever wants to be his disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow him.⁴⁰ The commitment to follow Jesus must be renewed daily and lived out by making the Father’s will one’s top priority.

Similarly, self-denial is the first aspect of obedience, which is equally critical to being a disciple. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “The response of the disciple is an act of

37. Eph 4:23.

38. Chan, *Multiply*, 22.

39. Matt 7:14.

40. Luke 9:23.

obedience, not a confession of faith in Jesus.”⁴¹ His position suggests that mere belief or confession in Jesus is insufficient to be a disciple. The response of true disciples is in their obedience and not in their confession alone. In Matt 7, Jesus explained how important obedience to God is in discipleship when he said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and, in your name, perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.’”⁴² In light of this text, disciples display commitment to their relationship with God by consistently obeying God’s Word.

Another important requirement of a disciple of Jesus is intimacy with God and fellowship with others. The disciples of Jesus had privileged access to his personal life, miracles, and teachings. In Matt 13 Jesus spoke a parable, and after the multitude left, the disciples approached Jesus for his interpretation of the parable. Jesus shared with them on this and other occasions the interpretation of the parable. In fact, Jesus told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables.”⁴³ The difference in relationship between the multitude and the disciples’ access to Christ mirrors the relationship between those who attend church (the multitude) and those who are obedient to God’s word (disciples). The theological implications here suggest that intimate fellowship with Christ grants privileged revelation.

41. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, SCM Classics (London, UK: SCM Press, 1948), Kindle loc. 785.

42. Matt 7:21-23.

43. Mark 4:11.

Leslie D. Weatherhead writes that fellowship is one of the most important things in Christian life.⁴⁴ Indeed it is; fellowship with other saints and interaction with non-Christians is the way of the disciple. Several times throughout the New Testament we see Jesus interacting with non-believers. One such occasion occurs in Matt 9:10-13, when Jesus had dinner with sinners at the tax collector's house. When hearing concerns about his interaction with sinners Jesus responded, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means; 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."⁴⁵ In this text Jesus explains that on occasion there is need for the Christian to engage sinners. In 1 John 1 the disciples express their passion for others to also experience fellowship with them like the relationship they had enjoyed with Jesus and his Father: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."⁴⁶ It is impossible to evangelize non-believers, comfort the mourning, and heal the sick unless there is some interaction by the disciple between the unbeliever.

Finally, discipleship calls for consistency, courage, and often alienation. In 1 John 1:3 the writer pens, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."⁴⁷ When Jesus appeared among the Jews, he did not look or act like what the Jews were expecting. Similarly, today's disciple of Christ may not act or look like what people in religious circles expect. Nonetheless, the call to be a disciple of

44. Leslie D. Weatherhead, *Discipleship* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1958), 50.

45. Matt 9:12-13.

46. 1 John 1:3.

47. 1 John 3:1.

Christ requires one to be consistently who Christ has called them to be, even if it is uncomfortable, unpopular, and different from everyone else. Ogden puts it this way: “Jesus wants us to count the cost up front because he is not looking for halfhearted followers who can’t complete what they have started.”⁴⁸ Because Christian transformation is an ongoing process, discipleship requires commitment until death.

Biblical Examples of Discipling

Elms posits that in discipleship there are two principles: the principle of association and the principle of instruction. He further argues, “The effect this ministry of making disciples by association has on the men in training is powerful, dramatic and life changing.”⁴⁹ Jesus’ relationship with his disciples supports Elms’s position.

Jesus provides the greatest case study of discipling in the Bible. The amount of time he spent with his disciples demonstrated that time and availability were important in discipleship. Likewise, Jesus provided hands-on training with his disciples, as seen in Matt 17. He also rebuked his disciples, as demonstrated in Matt 16.

In Matt 8:3 Jesus modeled for the disciples compassion and holistic ministry. Although the disciples were willing to send the people away hungry, Jesus emphasized the importance of ministering to the whole man. In Matt 14:27-29, when Jesus walked on water and Peter asked him if it was him, Jesus bid him to come. If this was a classroom setting, this would be considered the practical part of the lesson. Jesus call to Peter in the moment was a call to exercise his faith. Peter was about to do that, which was unnatural and most likely very frightening.

48. Ogden, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple*, Kindle loc. 50.

49. Elms, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 32, loc. 385.

In Matt 12:13-17, Jesus also taught the disciples the importance of obeying the laws of the land. He taught his disciples about worrying in Matt 6:25-34 when he assured them that as God takes care of the flowers so will he take care of them.

Similarly, there are other examples of discipleship in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament Elisha follows Elijah. First Kings 9:19 records how Elisha left his oxen, said good bye to his father, and followed Elijah. After Elijah ascended to heaven, Elisha received a double portion of his spirit.⁵⁰ Elisha ended up performing twice as many miracles as Elijah.

Naomi and Ruth also shared a relationship that mirrored discipleship and involved mentoring. Despite the hard time that Naomi experienced in the land of Moab, she must have done something right, inspiring Ruth to follow her. When Naomi had decided to leave Moab and return to her homeland, Ruth was explicit that she wanted to maintain a relationship not only with Naomi but also with Naomi's God. Ruth told Naomi, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."⁵¹ When we live right before God in the presence of others this not only attracts others to us but also attracts others to God.

There is much evidence that discipleship existed before Christ and certainly post-Christ. In fact, even John the Baptist had disciples. In Matt 11:3 we learn that John the Baptist's disciples went to Jesus on John's behalf. While discipleship is not strictly a Christian term, discipleship certainly has biblical roots.

50. 2 Kgs 2:9.

51. Ruth 1:16-18.

Biblical and Theological Implications for Spiritual Disciplines

Embracing the characteristics of God in many instances does not come naturally.

Paul's letter to the Colossians acknowledges that there are some things that converts must do as they mature in Christ:

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.⁵²

If the believers had no actionable response to the grace they received there would be no need for them to repent and turn from their old way of life.

Romans 12 also echoes that the individual has a role to play in response to God's gift of grace when it says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."⁵³ This text also implies that the believer must also participate in their mind's renewal process. What the text does not explicitly say is how this done.

Similarly, 2 Pet 3 warns believers to "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him . . . be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."⁵⁴ Although growth is a

52. Col 3:5-10, King James Version.

53. Rom 12:1-2.

54. 2 Pet 3:14, 17.

natural occurrence of living things, maturity in human life occurs through active participation or exercise. A child learns to walk by standing, then taking baby steps, taking more steps until they can eventually run. Likewise, students go through a series of exams from kindergarten to post-graduate studies, excelling in each level until their studies are completed. Growth in human life thus requires some level of intentionality and personal commitment.

Christian formation or Christian faith requires both personal allegiance to Jesus and devotion to the truth about Jesus as revealed through the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ James R. Estep and Johnathon H. Kim contend that growth in Christian faith requires a lifestyle of faithfulness that develops and grows as well as a theological core.⁵⁶ This statement suggests that Christian formation is interdependent on our knowledge of God and faithful application of that knowledge. Christian formation is not a concept in the mind only.

For our spirituality to mirror Christ's there must be an integration of our faith in Christ, our affections, and our actions. We embrace Christ's nature when we learn to think the way he thinks, live the way he lived, love the way he loves. In Eph 4, the author calls for such an integrated approach to our Christian walk, insisting that the believer takes on a new mindset, putting away the old life while embracing new attitudes.

Certainly, when Christ was on earth he exuded kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. He lived a disciplined life. He practiced solitude, prayer, fasting, reading the Holy Scriptures, and participation in corporate worship. This does not indicate that these actions alone were responsible for the effectiveness of his ministry. However, it does suggest that Jesus wanted to leave behind a template of disciplines that his disciples could

55. Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 197, Kindle loc. 3195.

56. Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 196, Kindle loc. 3194.

follow to help contour their hearts and minds to be receptive and cooperative to God's will for their lives.

Spiritual disciplines require time to practice. This allotted time frees up space in our busy lives, redirecting our attention to God's Word and his presence. Hollinger rightly sums up why spiritual disciplines are important when he said, "They are called disciplines because they require personal discipline, which then becomes habitual and hence shapes both the inner and outer dimensions of life."⁵⁷ The end goal of spiritual disciplines is to facilitate renewal and Christian maturity. As we mature in Christ, we think, feel, and act more like he did. Our motives for our actions align more to his. Hence our inner and outer worlds are formed more in Christ-likeness. This is the desired outcome for all disciples of Christ.

Examples of Discipleship in the Bible

Daniel is an Old Testament leader who was described as having an excellent spirit. He also practiced spiritual disciplines. When Daniel was in prison in Babylon he chose not to eat the king's food but rather sought permission from the king's guard to eat vegetables and drink water for ten days. After the ten days passed, the king's guard inspected Daniel and found that he, Shadrech, Meshach, and Abednego did appear healthier than those who ate the king's food.⁵⁸ Later in the book of Daniel, he is seen participating in a fast again. The text states, "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three

57. Dennis Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands: Bringing Christian Thought, Passion, and Action Together* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 104.

58. Dan 1.

weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.”⁵⁹ This suggests that fasting was habitual for Daniel.

Daniel was also a man of prayer. Daniel 6:10 states, “Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.” Daniel did not begin praying because the decree had been published, nor did he cease from praying because the decree was published. Instead he prayed because that is what he had become accustomed to doing. Learning from the life of Daniel, spiritual disciplines and habits should be exercised consistently and not driven by the surrounding circumstances. It may have been easier for Daniel to eat the king’s food or pray privately after the decree was made, but rather he opened his windows, which indicates he was not afraid to be seen practicing his disciplines. Similarly, today disciples of Christ cannot fail to practice spiritual disciplines because of intimidation.

Queen Esther, whose story is recorded in the book of Esther in the Old Testament, also fasted and prayed. When Mordecai advised her of Haman’s plot she requested that the Jews fast. Likewise, she and her handmaids fasted.⁶⁰ Had Esther not seen the value of fasting she would have never requested that the Jews in Susa fast. She would have devised a plan of her intuition rather than turning down her plate. As a resident of the palace she could have easily acted on her volition. Rather she chose to call a corporate fast before approaching the king. After the fast, Esther approached the king and found favor with him. The Jews’ lives were spared and in turn Haman lost his. There was much

59. Dan 10:2-3.

60. Esth 4:15-16.

wisdom in Esther's approach. Her actions showed a level of humility and good judgment that her predecessor, Queen Vashti, did not exhibit.

David was not only king of Israel but also a psalmist. David was a man who practiced several spiritual disciplines. In Ps 63, David recalls how he mediated on God's word in the night watches. In Ps 138, David is seen worshipping God by expressing gratitude when he says, "I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."⁶¹ In Ps 142, when David was in the Cave of Adullam, we see him use this time of solitude to cry out to the Lord in prayer.

After Paul's encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus, he immediately spent some time in solitude in the Arabian wilderness.⁶² Paul was also a man of prayer. In several letters he referenced praying for the saints and in 2 Corinthians, Paul writes about his prayers to the Lord and the response he received:

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.⁶³

Conclusion

In Paul's letter to Timothy he wrote, "If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the

61. Ps 138:1-2, King James Version.

62. Acts 9:22; Gal 1:16-17.

63. 2 Cor 12:17-19.

faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."⁶⁴ Certainly, godly training is necessary for Christian growth. Modeling Jesus' life is important to those desiring to be a Christian. Spiritual disciplines are not exercised to ignore, replace, or reproduce what the Holy Spirit does in one's life. Rather spiritual disciplines help yield us to discern and cooperate with the Holy Spirit. The right disciplines practiced the right way with the right goal is a form of godly training.

If Christ practiced spiritual disciplines how much more should his followers?

64. 1 Tim 4:6-8.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

The Bahama Islands is an archipelago of more than seven hundred islands and cays. Although many of the islands are depopulated, the Church of God of Prophecy has successfully established churches on sixteen islands. It was therefore important to include participants from more than New Providence (the capital) in this research project.

It is important to note that although many universities in the United States of America have satellite campus in the Bahamas, the Bahamas has only one university, The University of the Bahamas. Thus, it is common for Bahamians to pursue college degrees in the United States, Canada, Europe and the Caribbean. While abroad students are exposed to new experiences and often develop new worldviews. However, after completing their studies many students return home. Upon their return, there is usually an adjustment phase these graduates navigate as they reacclimatize to the church's culture. Since many of these students are within the age parameters of this research it was essential to have them participate as well.

Limitations of the Research

The intent of this research was to garner a good cross section of participation from pastors and youth leaders across the Bahamas. However, many of the pastors were not able to be reached or execute the survey electronically. While this presented some challenges, 14% of pastors in this survey were from the Family Island. This was

important to ensure that the results reflected in the pastor's response were not representative of New Providence only.

Only 25% of the youth leaders approached participated in this research, even after being nudged on several occasions. However, not all of the participants were from Nassau. Approximately 17% of the 12 participants were from the Family Islands.

Survey Instrument and Process

Since participants for this research were in different settings, a research instrument that was both cost effective and efficient was needed. It was determined that given these circumstances, questionnaires were the best research apparatus. Questionnaires provide a cost-efficient way to gather data from multiple persons who are not easily accessible. The questionnaires were exported to Google Forms, which is a user-friendly, survey administration app that can be accessed on computers and cellphones. Google Forms allow participants to access the link wherever and whenever they want, avoiding the face-to-face discomfort some participants feel when filling out a questionnaire and handing it back to the survey facilitator. Finally, the demographic for which this survey was designed are technologically advanced and find electronic surveys convenient and appealing.

All adult participants were sent an email, Facebook inbox, or what's app message with the survey link for their execution. Consent forms were secured from the parents of all adolescents who participated. All participants were advised of the purpose of the research, and the questions asked on the questionnaires were approved by the Institutional Review Board of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Because the researcher thought different perspectives were important to this research four questionnaires were designed as follows:

- **Pastors and Youth Leaders**

This questionnaire had 10 questions. Questions 1-2 requested basic information such as age and gender. Questions 3-7 focused on the church's past and current traditions. Questions 8-9 explored challenges and the way forward. Question 10 was directed toward funding.

- **Adolescents (teenagers between 12 and 17)**

This questionnaire had 7 questions. Questions 1-2 requested basic information such as age and gender. Questions 3-6 focused on spirituality. Question 7 focused on spiritual disciplines.

- **Bahamian millennials studying abroad**

10 questions were on this questionnaire. Questions 1-3 requested basic information such as age, gender, and year in studies. Question 4 asked about religious beliefs. Questions 5-7 inquired about attendance to youth ministry events prior to studying abroad, areas of participation in different areas of church, and current level of participation. Questions 8-9 focused on exposure to new experiences internationally and recommendations to improve youth ministry. Question 10 focused on spiritual disciplines.

- **Millennials residing in the Bahamas(New Providence and Family Islands)**

7 questions were on the questionnaire. Questions 1-2 requested basic information such as age, gender, and year in studies. Questions 3-5 focused on individual spirituality.

Question 6 inquired about the church's role in Christian formation, and question 7 addressed spiritual disciplines.

The data collected from each group of participants were collected and tabulated separately to explore whether there were any dynamics unique to each grouping.

Research Participants

As this research was specific to the Church of God of Prophecy, only participants from the COGOP were surveyed. Pastors, youth leaders, adolescents (12-17), and millennials were targeted as participants.

Participants included residents of Grand Bahama, Bimini, Andros, Exuma, Long Island, Eleuthera, and New Providence. The Family Islands data were collated separately from the participants in New Providence to see if any major variances emerged. Finally, Bahamian millennials studying in Canada, the United States, Jamaica, and London also participated in this research.

Survey Results

Adolescents (20 Participants)

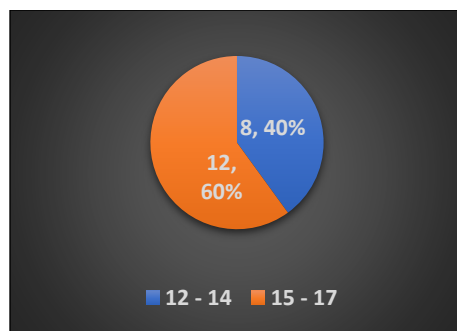


Figure 4.1. Age of Adolescents

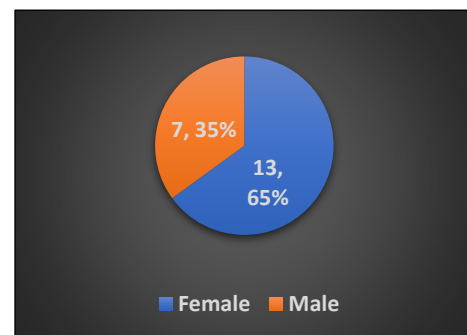


Figure 4.2. Gender of Adolescents

Figure 4.1 illustrates that 60% of the participants were between the ages of

15 and 17 and 40% were between the ages of 12 and 14. Figure 4.2 illustrates that 13 (65%) participants identified as female and 7 (35%) identified as male.

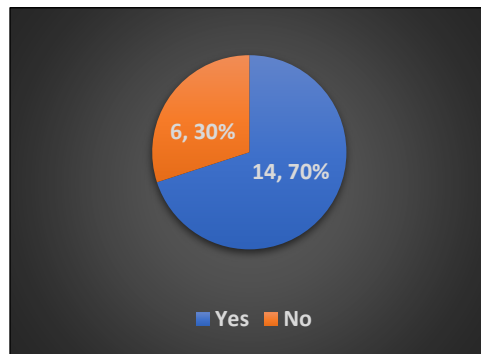


Figure 4.3. Religious Beliefs

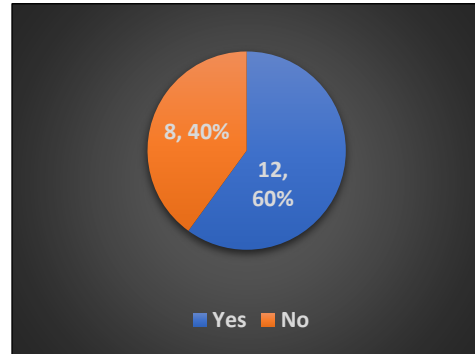


Figure 4.4. Awareness

Figure 4.3 demonstrates that 70% of the participants confirmed that they were Christians; 30% said they were not. Figure 4.4 illustrates that when asked, “Do you know what a spiritual discipline is?” 12 (60%) respondents did not know what a spiritual discipline was, and 8 (40%) participants did.

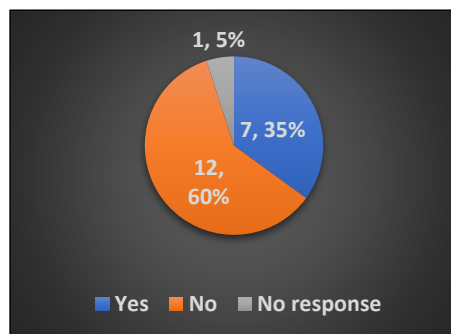


Figure 4.5. Satisfaction Level

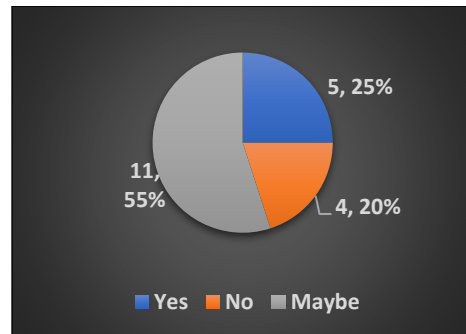


Figure 4.6. Openness

Figure 4.5 illustrates that only 19 participants responded to this question; 12 (60%) participants indicated that they were not satisfied with their spirituality and 7 (35%) participants said they were. Figure 4.6: illustrates the response to the question, “If

there was evidence that spiritual disciplines aid Christian formation would you be willing to practice them?” Of the participants, 11 or 55% responded maybe; 4(20%) opposed practicing spiritual disciplines and 5(25%) indicated that maybe they would be willing.

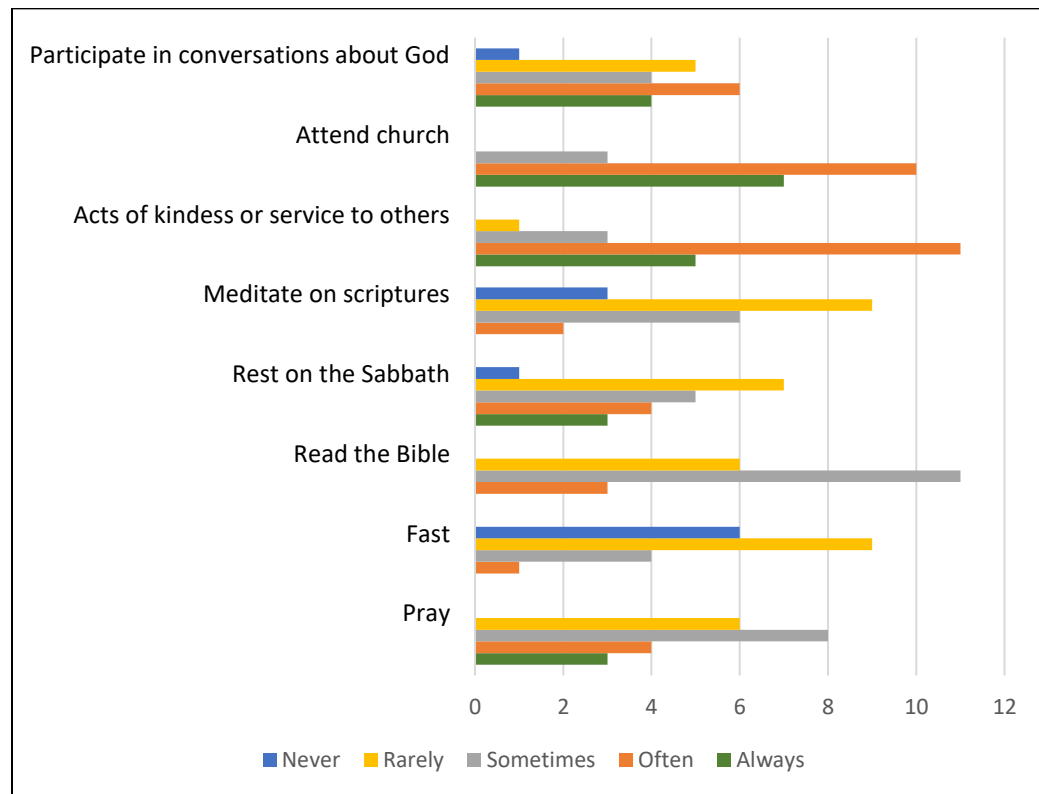


Figure 4.7. Frequency of Spiritual Disciplines and Practices

Figure 4.7 demonstrates that most teens attended church, spoke about God, and participated in acts of kindness regularly. However, fasting, Sabbath rest, and meditation were infrequent practices. The results also demonstrated that while many of the adolescents indicated they read the Bible and prayed, these practices were not done consistently, only sometimes.

Pastors (20 Participants) and Youth Leaders (12 Participants)

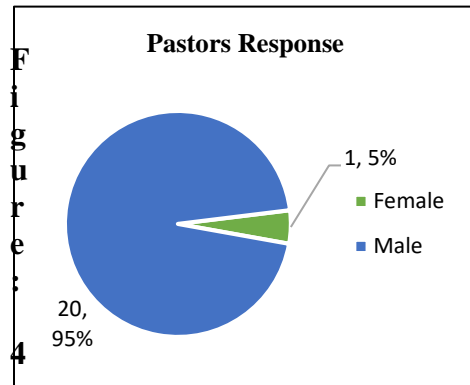


Figure 8a. Gender

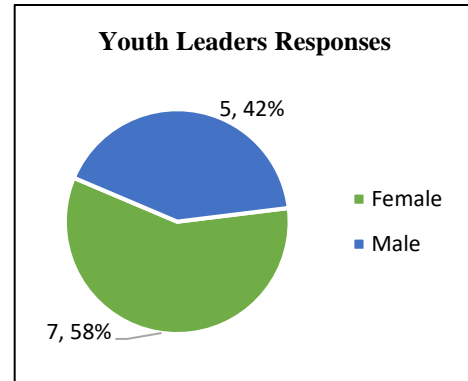


Figure 4.8b. Gender

Figure 4.8a reveals that 1 female pastor participated in this research and 20 males. Of the youth leaders who participated, 58% were females as indicated in figure 4.8b.

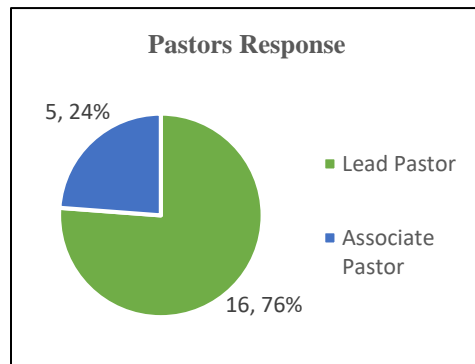


Figure 4.9a. Position Title

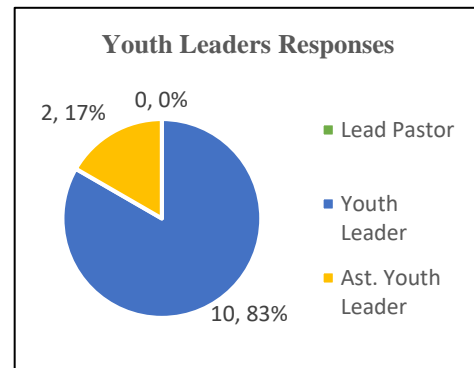


Figure 4.9b. Position Title

Figure 4.9a illustrates that 76% percent of the participants were lead pastors and 4% associate pastors. Figure 4.9b indicates that 83% of the participants were youth leaders while 17% were assistant youth leaders.

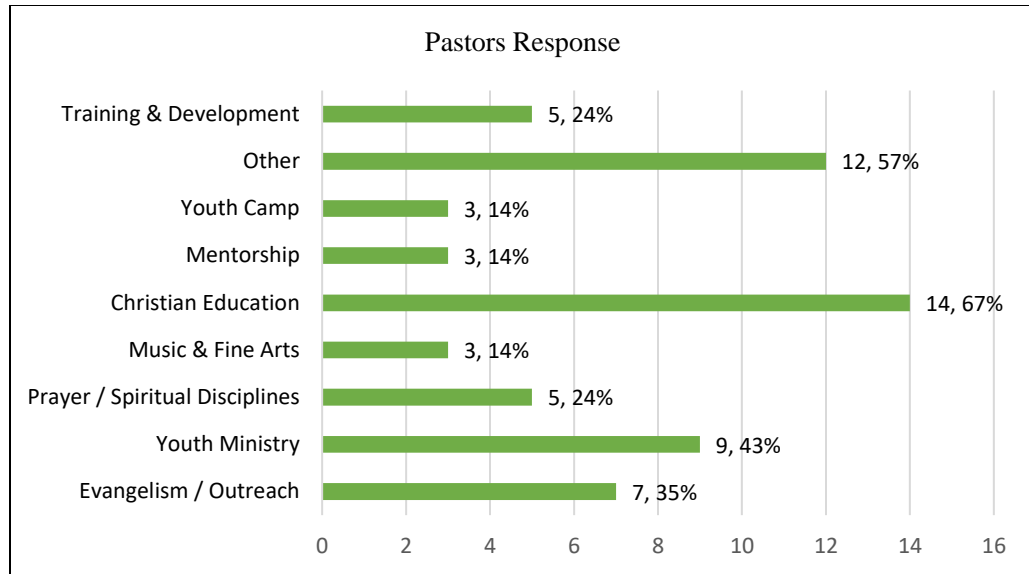


Figure 4.10a. Church Traditions That Were Instrumental to Pastors

When asked, “Which traditions were instrumental in your Christian formation,”

Figure 4.10a illustrates that 67% of the pastors noted Christian education; 43% stated youth ministry representing the most instrumental ministries.

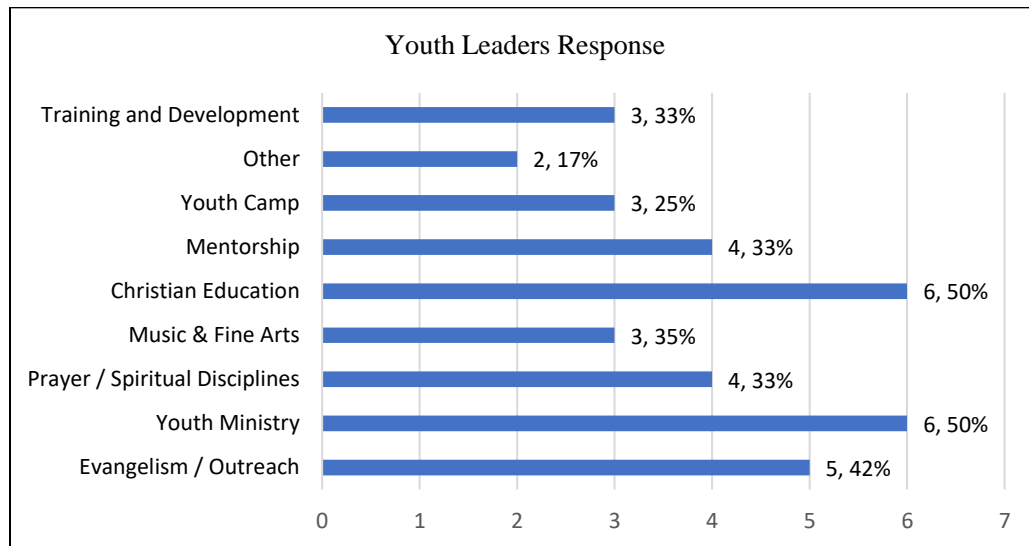


Figure 4.10b. Church Traditions That Were Instrumental to Youth Leaders

Figure 4.10b illustrates that both Christian education and youth ministry were chosen by 50% of the youth leaders as their most formative ministries. These results indicate that both pastors and youth leaders felt Christian education and youth ministry played a pivotal role in their development.

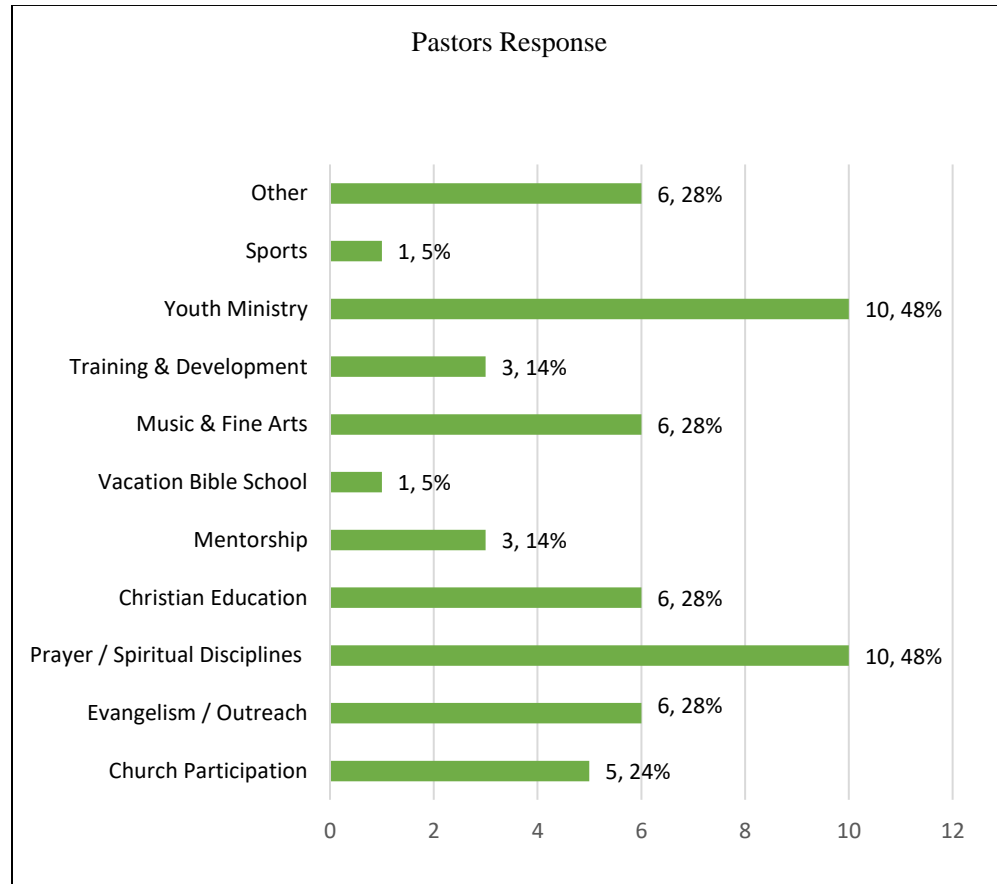


Figure 4.11a. Current Practices as They Relates to Discipleship of Youth and Millennials

Figure 4.11a illustrates the responses pastors gave when asked, “What are some of the areas your church currently focuses on in regard to discipleship of teens and millennials?” Of the participants, 48% selected youth ministry and prayer as practices

they employ to assist in their discipleship efforts. Of the pastors, 28% also selected evangelism and outreach, music and fine arts, and Christian education as discipleship opportunities.

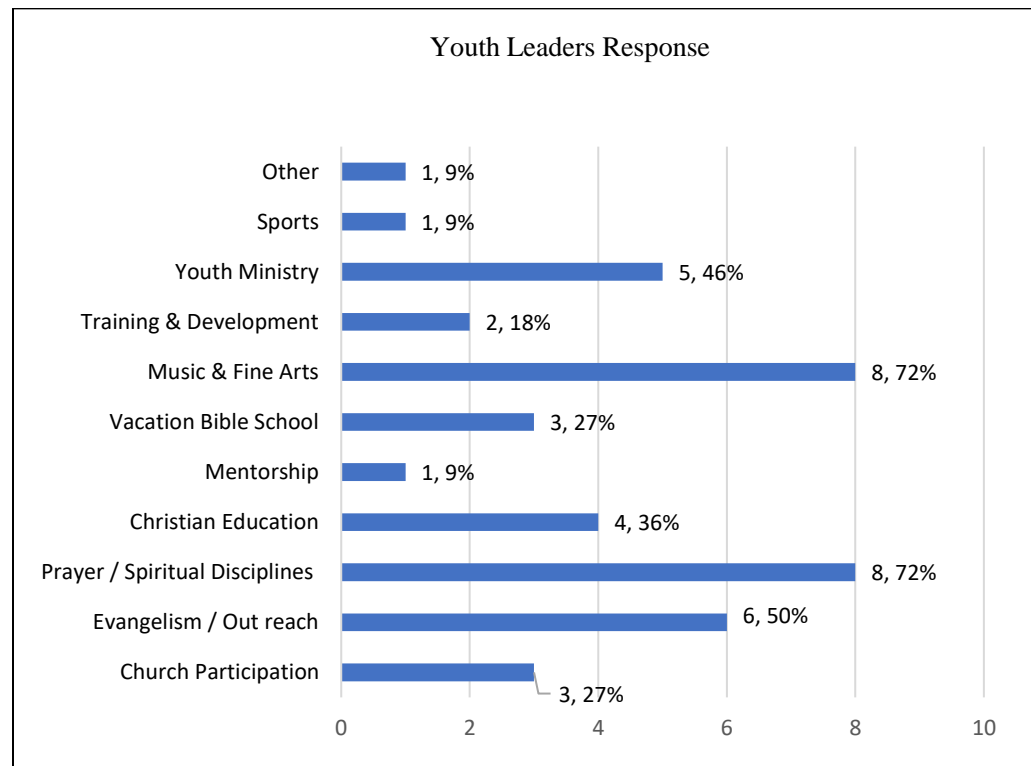


Figure 4.11b. Current Practices of They Relate to Discipleship of Youth and Millennials

When asked, “What are some of the areas your church currently focuses on regarding discipleship of teens and millennials?” figure 4.11b illustrates that 72% of youth leaders selected fine arts and prayer, while 46% specified youth ministry, and only 36% specified Christian education as discipleship.

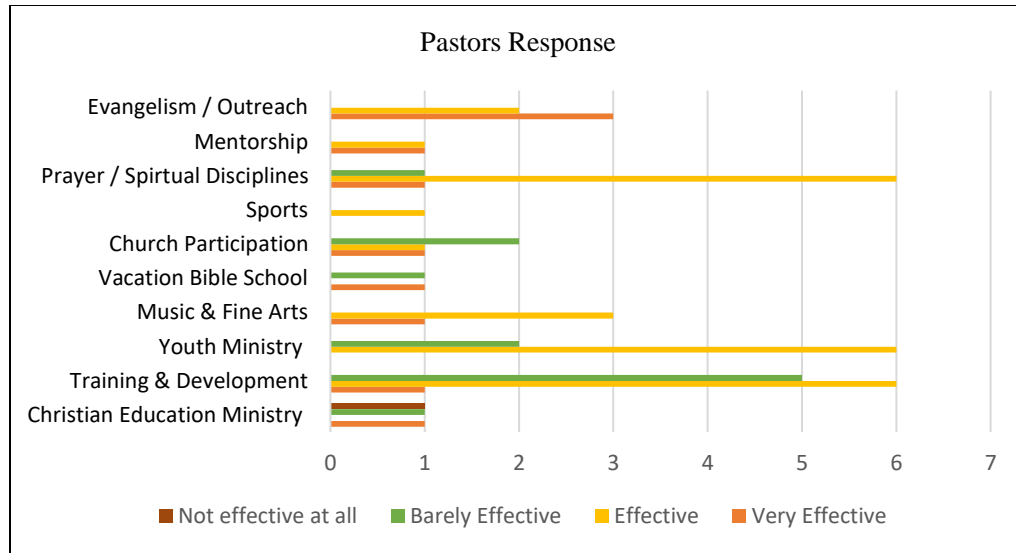


Figure 4.12a. Practices/Disciplines Effectiveness Ratings

Figure 4.12a reflects that 48% of pastors felt that youth ministry, prayer and other spiritual disciplines and leadership training and development were the most effective practice current church practices. Only 14% of the pastors selected music and fine arts and as effective and 14% found evangelism and outreach not effective.

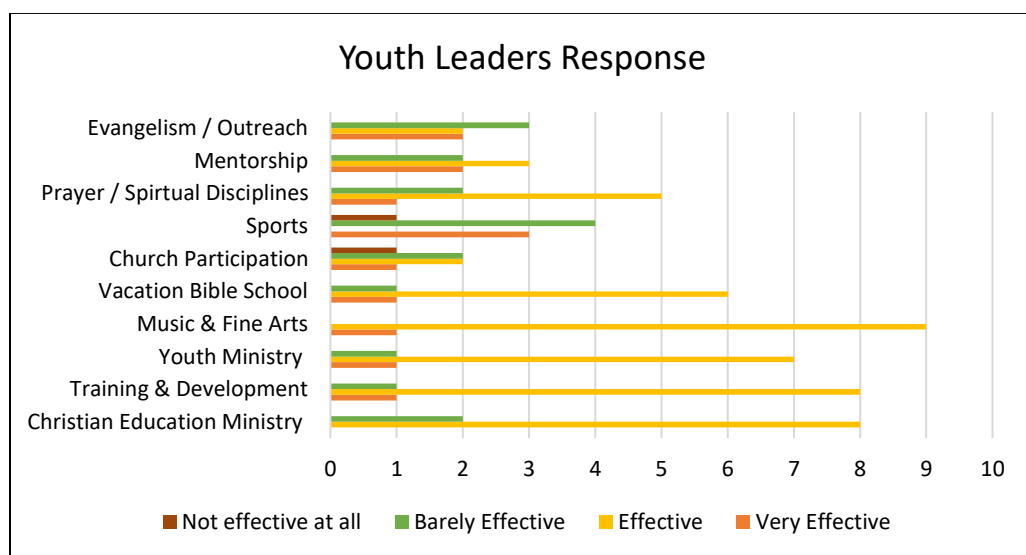


Figure 4.12b. Practices/Disciplines Effectiveness Ratings

Figure 4.12b illustrates that 75% youth leaders selected music and fine arts as effective. 66% selected Christian education and leadership training and development as most effective traditions. Of the youth leaders, 58% vote that Youth Ministry was an effective tradition and 50% voted that Vacation Bible School was an effective tradition. Mentorship and prayer ministry were also viewed by youth leaders as effective traditions.

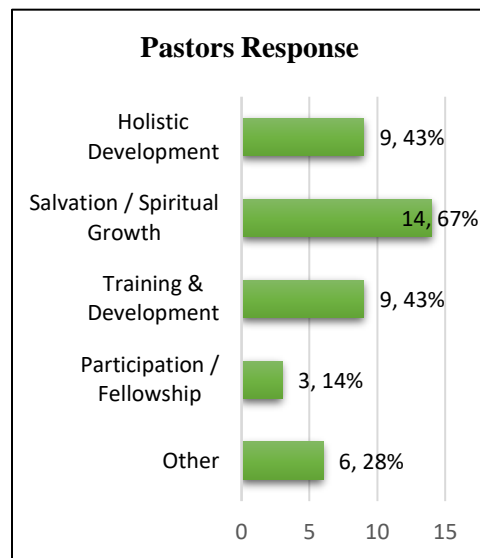


Figure 4.13a. Rationale

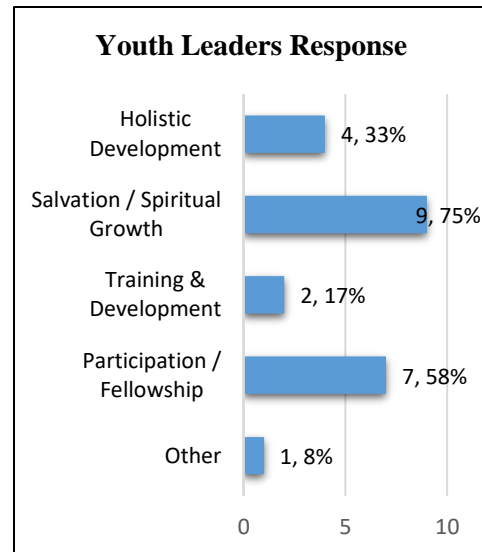


Figure 4.13b. Rationale

When asked, “What is the rationale behind these practices?” figure 4.13a and figure 4.13b indicate that both pastors (67%) and youth leaders (75%) reflected that the primary reason behind the practices of choice is salvation and spiritual growth. However, figure 4.13a illustrates that holistic development and training and development is the secondary motive for pastors. Figure 4.13b illustrates that the secondary motives for youth leaders is participation / fellowship.

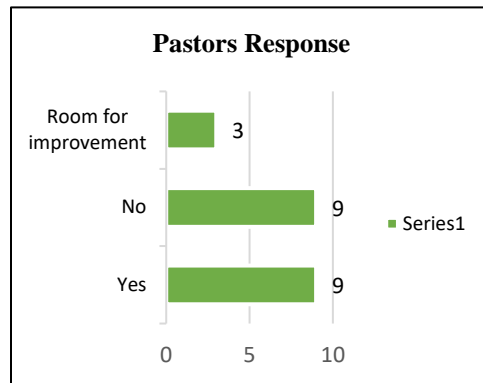


Figure 4.14a. Satisfaction

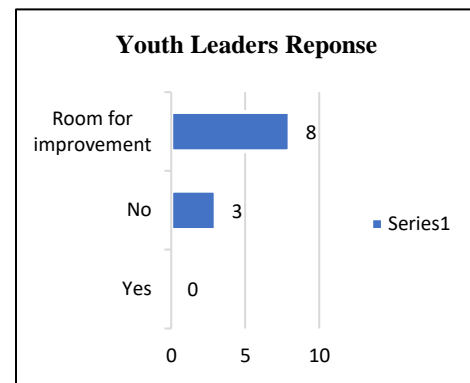


Figure 4.14b. Satisfaction

Figure 4.14a illustrates that while 43% of pastors are satisfied with the results of the current practices, 45% are not. Figure 4.14b illustrates that 8 or 67% of youth leaders feel as if there is room for improvement. No youth leader was satisfied with the results.

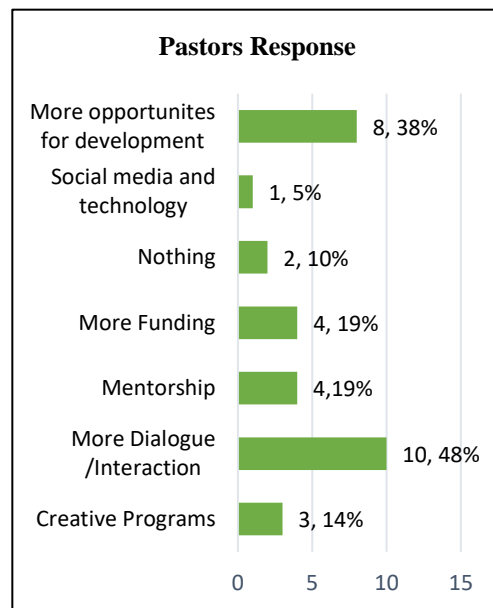


Figure 4.15a. Changes

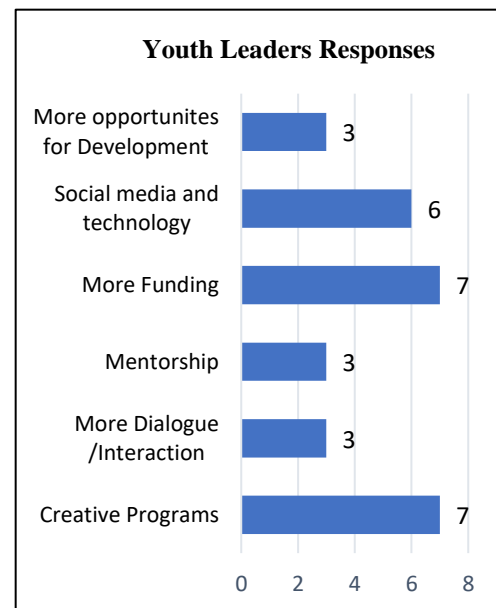


Figure 4.15b. Changes

When asked, “What, if anything, would you change as it relates to how you interact with youth and millennials,” figure 4.15a demonstrates that 48% of the pastors would like more dialogue/interaction and 38% recommend more development opportunities. Meanwhile, figure 4.15b demonstrates that 58% of youth leaders would like more funding and creative programs, and 50% would incorporate more use of social media and technology.

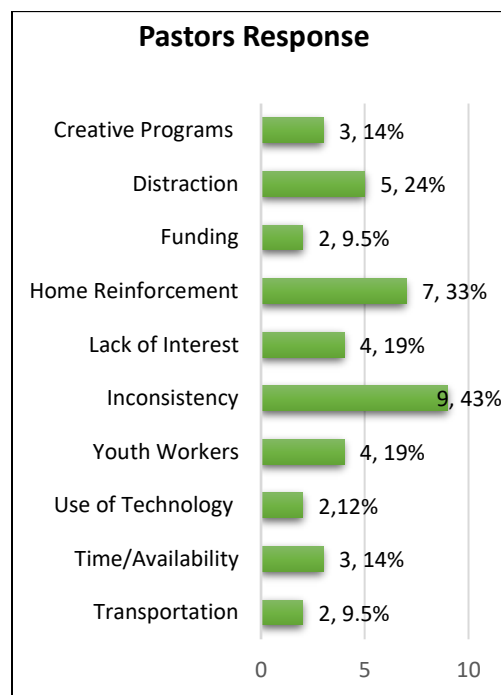


Figure 4.16a. Challenges

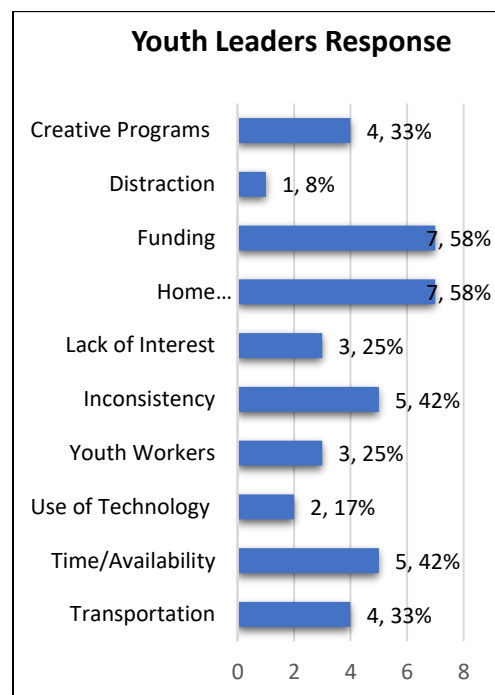


Figure 4.16b. Challenges

When asked, “What are some of the challenges you face in your youth discipleship efforts?” figure 4.16a illustrates that 43% percent of the pastors indicated that inconsistency from youth was the main challenge they experienced. (33%) indicated challenges with home reinforcement. Figure 4.16b illustrates that youth leaders found funding (58%) and lack of home/parent reinforcement (58%) as their main challenge.

Youth leaders also indicated that both inconsistency (42%) and lack of time/availability (42%) were equally challenging.

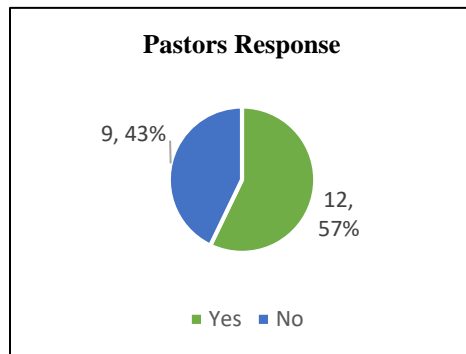


Figure 4.17a. Budget

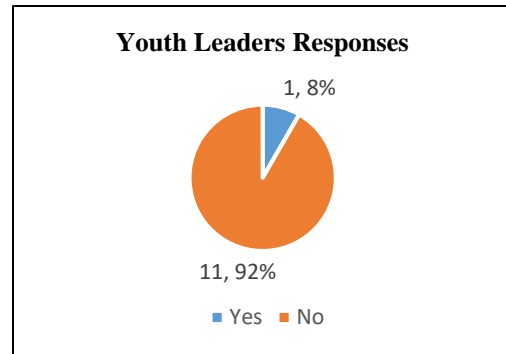


Figure 4.17b. Budget

According to figure 4.17a, 57% of the pastors confirmed that their church does not have a youth ministry budget. Figure 4.17b illustrates that 92% of youth leaders confirmed that their church does not have a budget.

Students Studying Abroad (20 Participants)

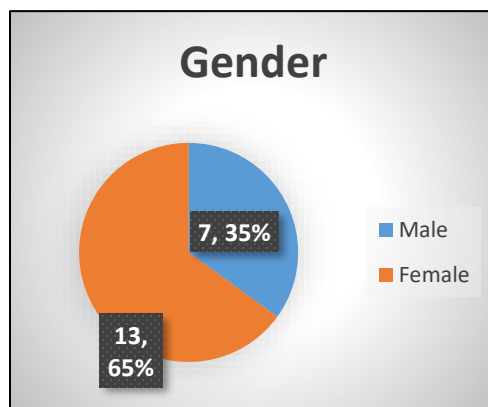


Figure 4.18a. Gender

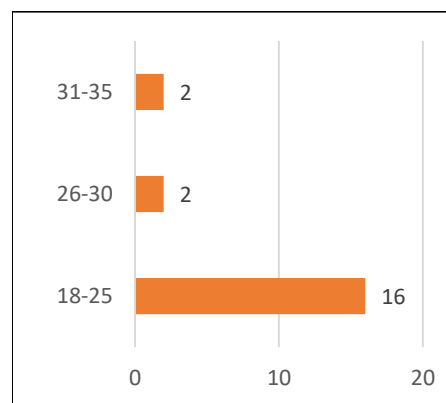


Figure 4.18b. Age

Figure 4.18a illustrates that 7 (35%) participants were male and 13 (65%) were female. Figure 4.18b reflects that 16 (80%) participants selected 18-25, 2(10%) of the participants selected 26-30, and 2 (10%) selected 31-35.

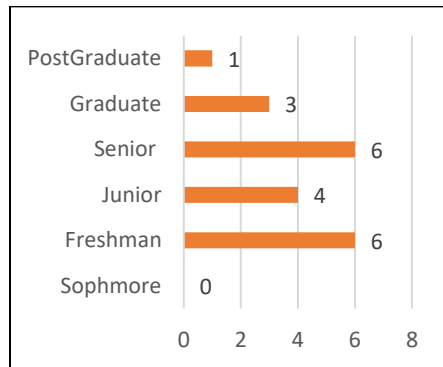


Figure 4.19. Year in Studies

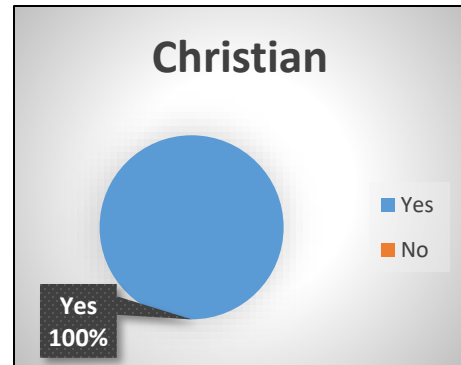


Figure 4.20. Religious Beliefs

Figure 4.19 indicates that 6 (30%) participants were freshman, 4 (20%) were juniors, 6 (30%) were seniors, 3 (15%) were graduates, and 1 (5%) were postgraduates.

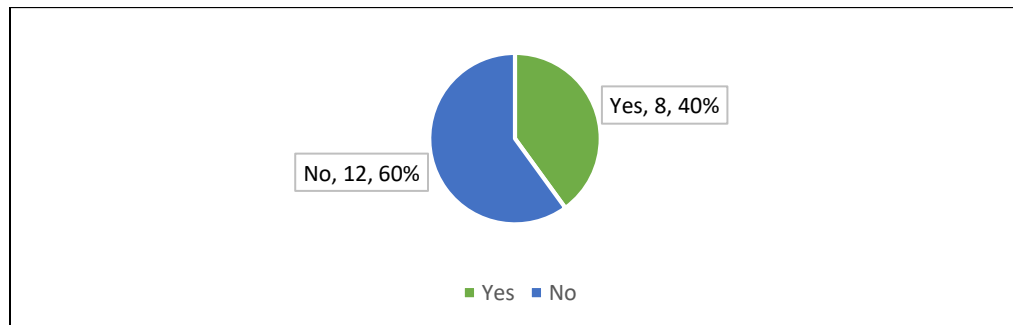


Figure 4.21. Attendance in Youth Ministry Prior to Studies Abroad

Figure 4.21 indicates the responses when asked, "Did you attend youth ministry regularly before you went off to school? If not, why not?" 8 (40%) participants said yes

and 12 (60%) said no. However, only 3 participants elaborated on their response: 1 participant said they did not attend for “no reason in particular,” 1 participant said they would “rather not say,” and 1 participant did not attend youth ministry because there was no active youth ministry at their local church.

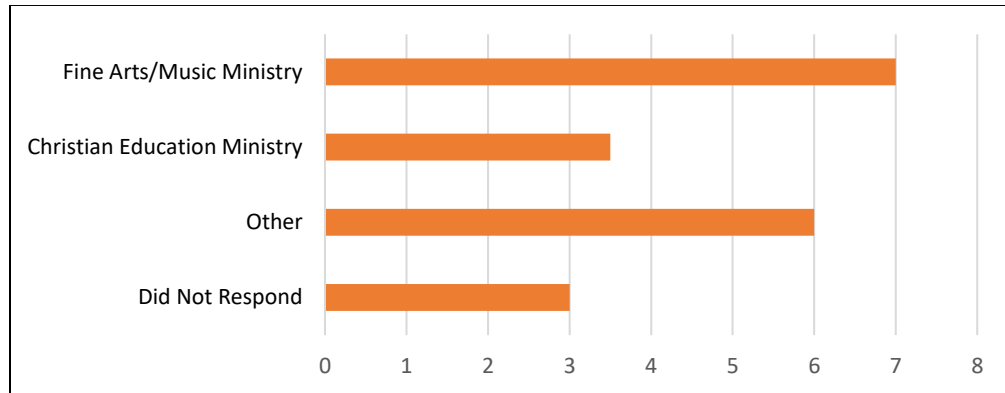


Figure 4.22. Participation in Other Ministries Prior to Studies Abroad

Figure 4.22 illustrates areas that students off to school participated in prior to leaving for college. These results indicated that 35% of the participants were active in fine arts and only 20% were active in Christian education ministry.

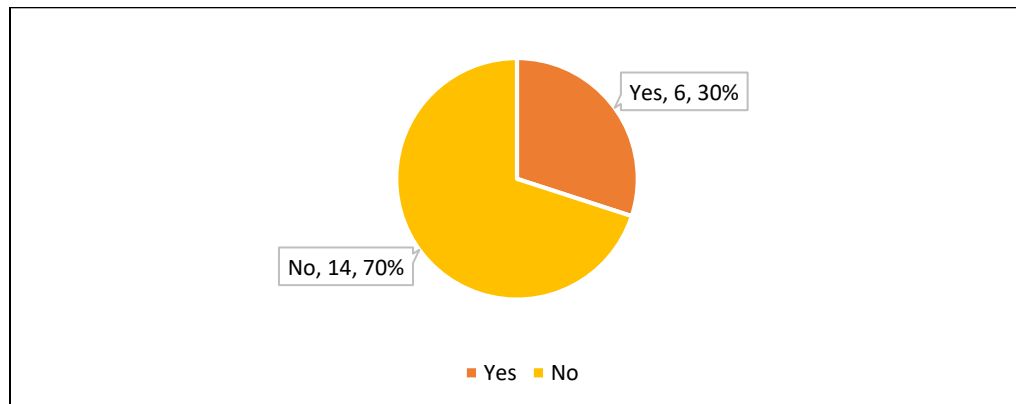


Figure 4.23. Current Participation

Figure 4.23 illustrates that 70% percent of the participants stated that they were no longer active in any of these areas while studying abroad, but 30% still were.

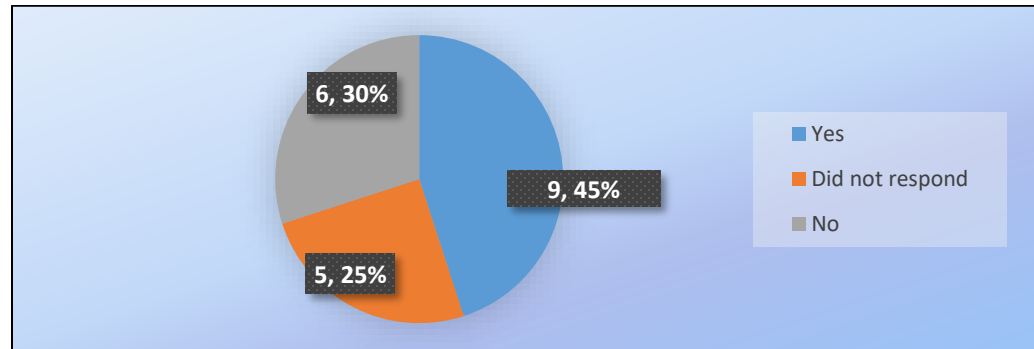


Figure 4.24a. New Experiences

Figure 4.24a illustrates that when asked, “Have you had any new experiences since being off to school that could improve how we currently facilitate youth ministry in the Bahamas?” 9 (45%) of participants acknowledged they had new experiences.

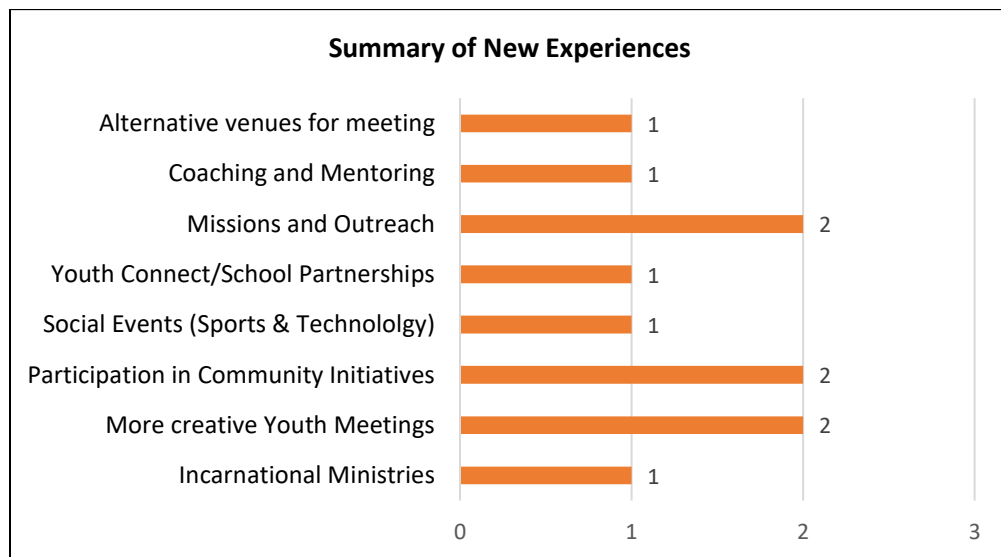


Figure 4.24b. New Experiences Summary

Figure 4.248b outlines what some of those experiences were. There were 3 new experiences that were shared by 2 other participants, and they are creative youth ministries, participation in community initiatives, and missions and outreach.

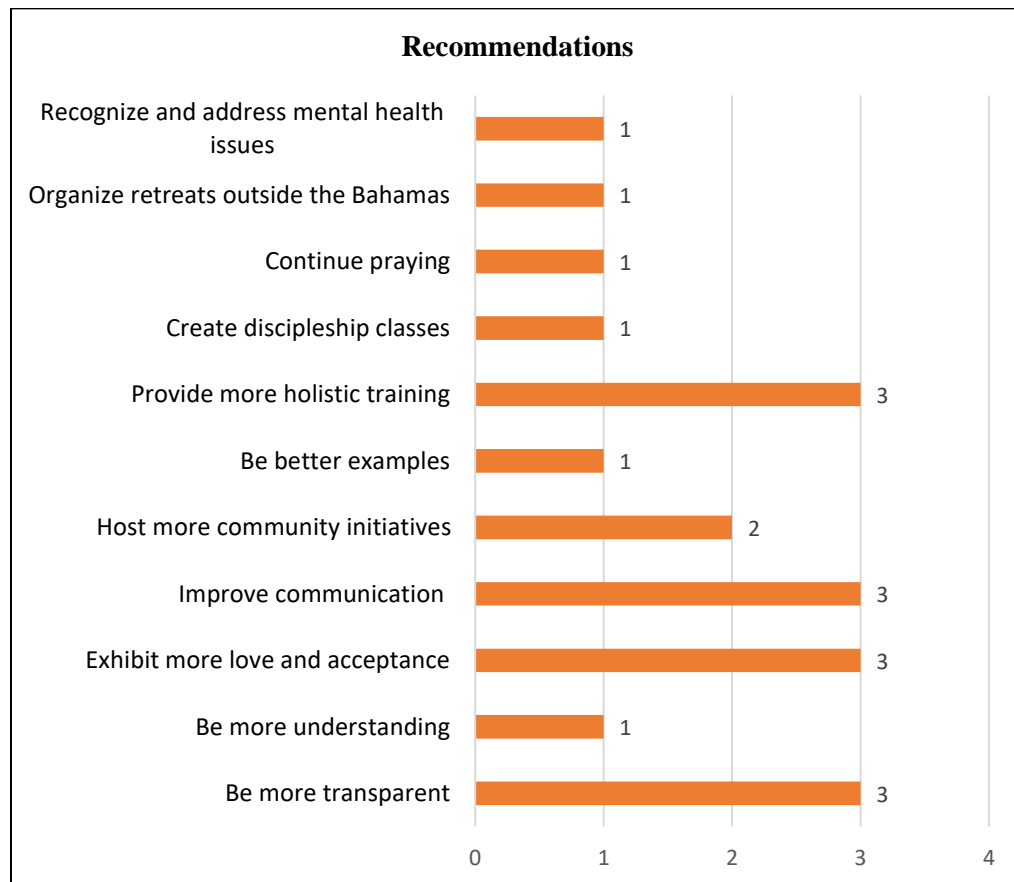


Figure 4.25. Recommendations

Figure 4.25 illustrates the responses when asked, “What recommendations would you offer to youth leaders and pastors to help young adults in their Christian formation?” There were 4 recommendations that were repeated by 3 (15%) different students who are abroad: be more transparent, exhibit more love and acceptance, improve communication, and provide more holistic training.

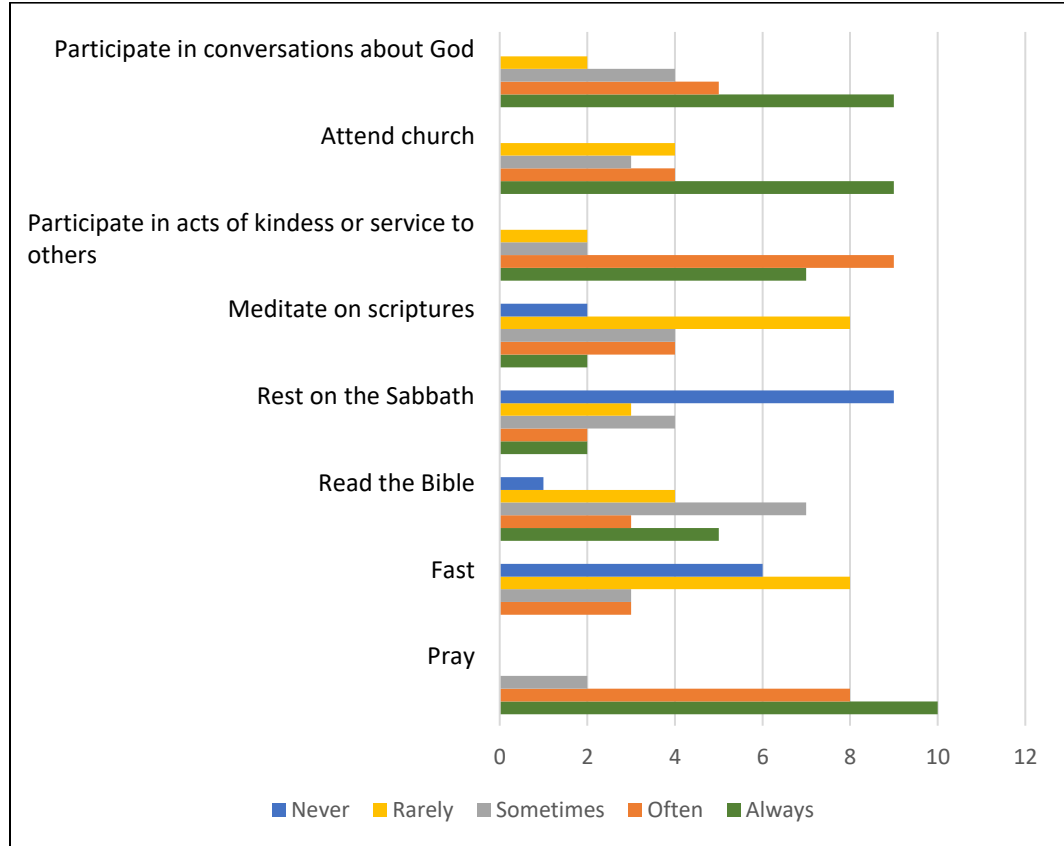


Figure 4.26. Frequency of Spiritual Disciplines and Practices

Figure 4.26 illustrates that 10 (50%) students indicated that they always prayed, and 8 (40%) indicated that they always attended church and participated in conversations about God. However, fasting, resting on the Sabbath, and meditation on the Scriptures were among the infrequent practices. In fact, 9 (45%) of the students indicated that they never rested on the Sabbath while 6 (30%) indicated that they never fasted and 2 (10%) admitted they do not meditate on the Scriptures.

Millennials in the Bahamas

Family Island (32 Participants)

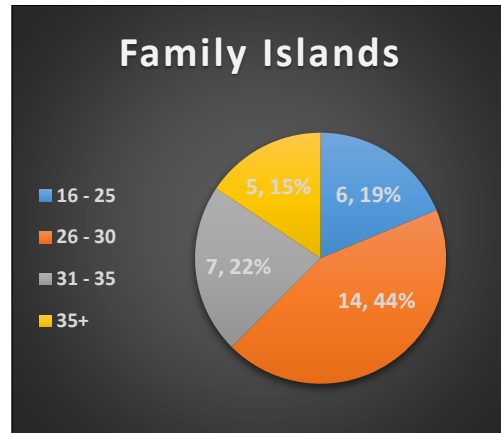


Figure 4.27a. Age

New Providence (139 Participants)

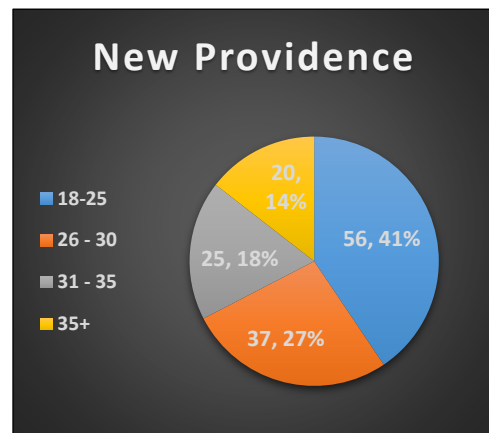


Figure 4.27b. Age

Figure 4.27a illustrates that 26-30 was the age group with the most participants from the Family Islands with 44% of the participants. However, Figure 4.27b indicates that 41% of the participants in Nassau were between the ages of 18-25. These results also indicate that overall most of the participants in this survey were between the ages of 18-30.

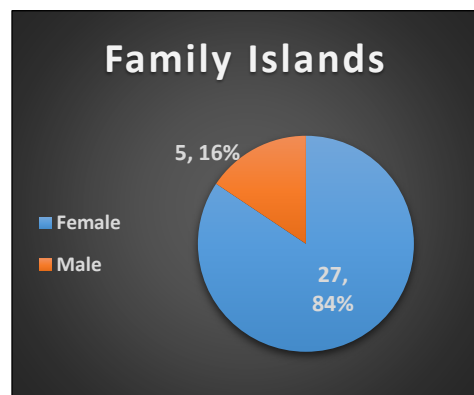


Figure 4.28a. Gender

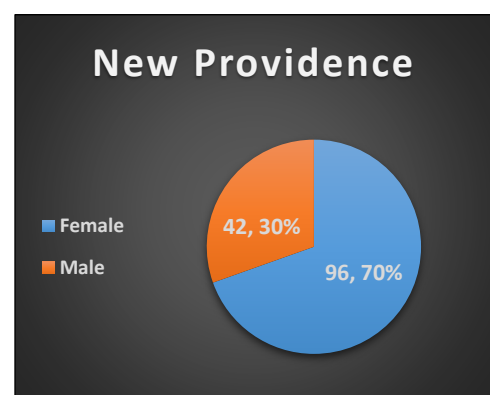


Figure 4.28b. Gender

Figure 4.28a illustrates that 84% of the Family Islands participants were female, and 70% of the participants in New Providence were females according to figure 4.28b.

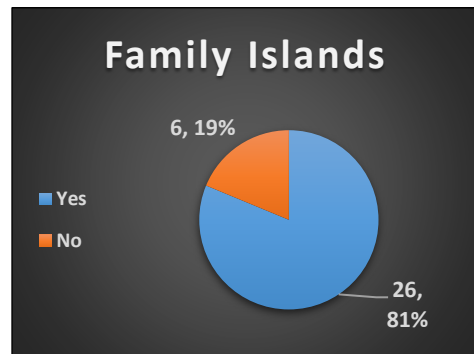


Figure 4.29a. Religion

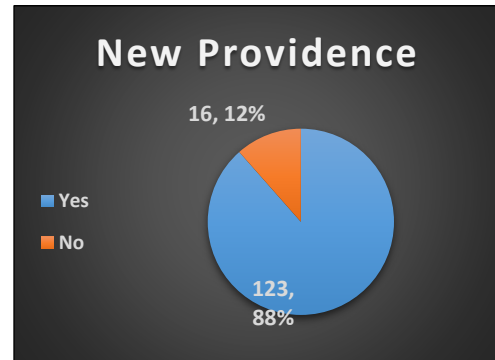


Figure 4.29b. Religion

When asked if they were a Christian, 81% of the Family Island participants said yes (see figure 4.29a). Similarly, figure 4.29b indicates that 88% of the participants in New Providence identified as being a Christian as well.

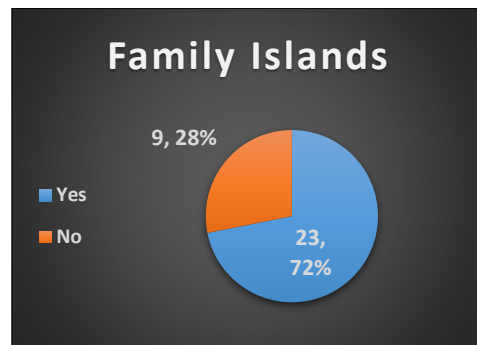


Figure 4.30a. Spirituality

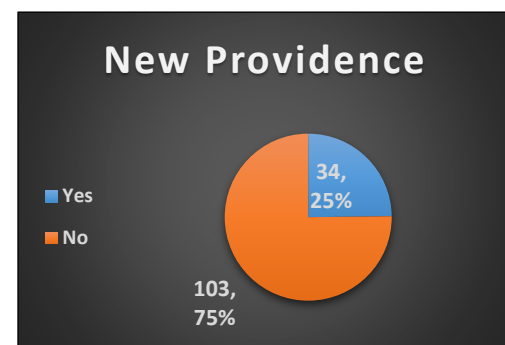


Figure 4.30b. Spirituality

Figures 4.30a and 4.30b indicate that more than 70% of both Family Islands and New Providence participants were not satisfied with their spirituality.

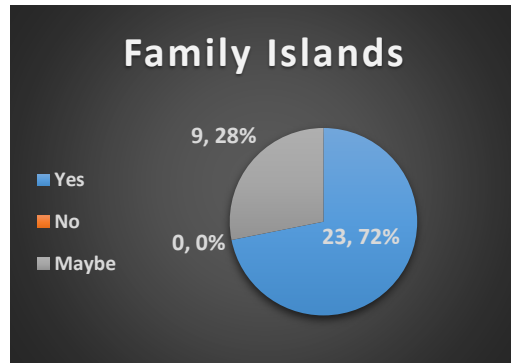


Figure 4.31a. Spiritual Disciplines

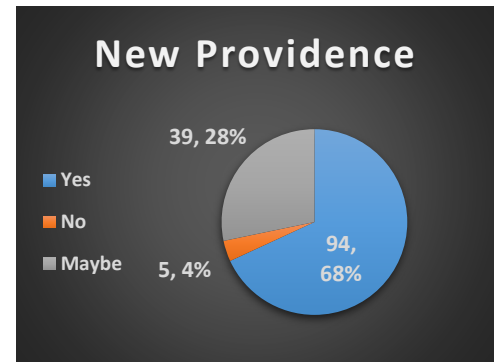


Figure 4.31b. Spiritual Disciplines

Figure 4.31a illustrates that no one from the Family Islands opposed practicing disciplines. However, Figure 4.31b indicates that 4% of the participants in New Providence said they were not willing to practice spiritual disciplines even if there was evidence that they aided Christian formation.

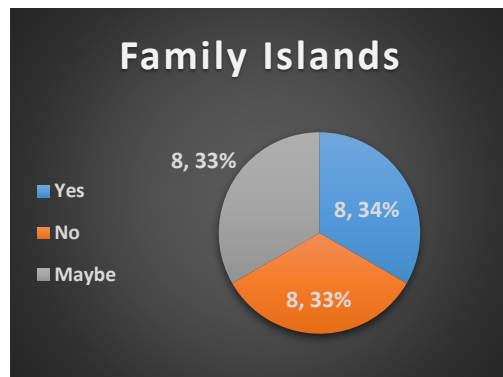


Figure 4.32a. Church Efforts

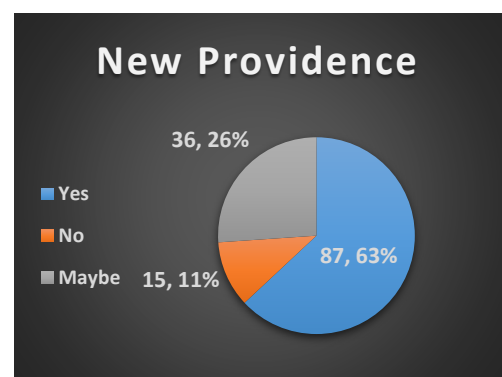


Figure 4.32b. Church Efforts

When asked if “There was more the church can do to assist you with your Christian formation?” the Family Islands participants shared equal views; 33% said yes, 33% said no, and 33% said maybe (see figure 4.32a). However, as demonstrated in figure 4.32b, 63% of the participants in New Providence said yes and only 11% said no.

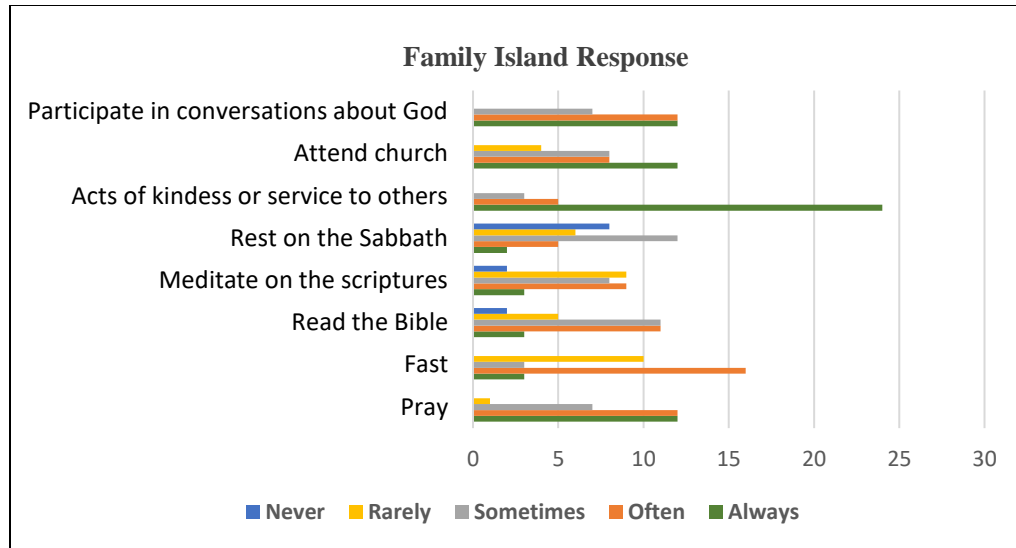


Figure 4.33a. Frequency of Spiritual Disciplines and Practices (Family Islands)

Figure 4.33a illustrates that 24 (75%) of the Family Islands participants indicated that they always participate in acts of kindness; 13 (40%) of the participants indicate they attend church regularly and participate in conversations about God.

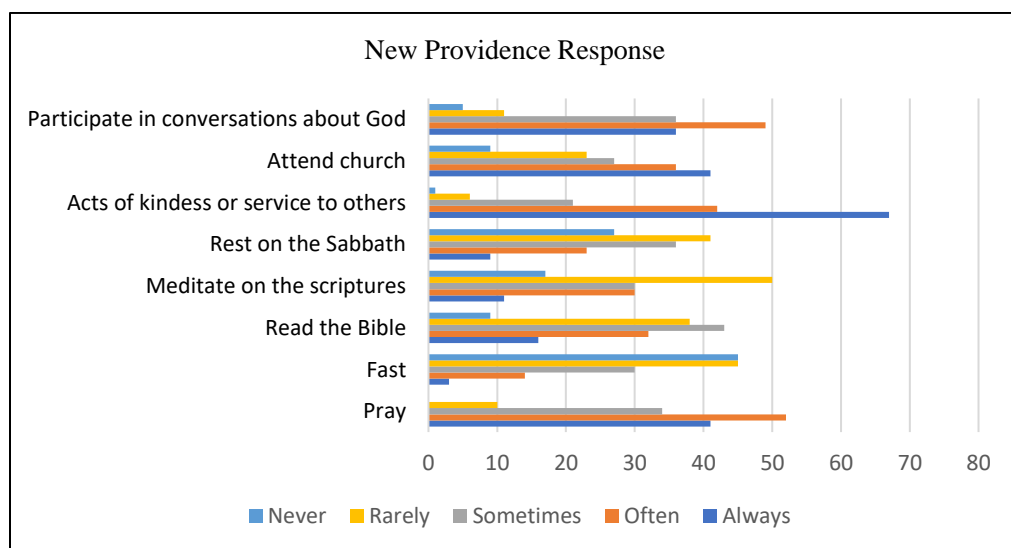


Figure 4.33b. Spiritual Disciplines and Practices (New Providence)

Figure 4.33b illustrates the responses from New Providence when asked how often they participate in certain spiritual exercises. Of the participants, 68 (49%) indicated that they always express gratitude to God, 55 (40%) said they always participate in acts of kindness and service, and 42 (30%) indicated they always attend church. However, 28 (20%) indicated that they never rest on the Sabbath, and 45 (32%) indicated they never fast.

Conclusion

For the most part many participants answered every question. The results showed a few variances between the pastors and youth leaders' perception of the challenges and changes necessary for discipleship in teens and millennials. Additionally, some behavioral patterns were also identified among the teens and millennials. The results will be discussed in chapter 5, along with recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

For years, missionaries, evangelists, pastors, youth workers, and layman alike have been effectively ministering to and discipling teens and millennials. To this end the Christian narrative has been shared in almost every language and nation in the world. The Church of God of Prophecy has done its part in sharing the good news. The church in the Bahamas has prevailed through dire times and continues to earn its rightful voice in the community.

Today amid rough seas and storms the church sails on, moving through high winds of distraction, heresies, LGBT agendas, and the like. Defiant and focused, the church is facing persecution yet fighting to maintain its potent heritage while intentionally and prayerfully engaging the world with the gospel. To this end, this research was designed to explore Christian formation, specifically the discipleship of teens and millennials in the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas.

Such research required an assessment of literature of the following:

- Youth culture
- Youth leaders
- Spirituality
- Discipleship
- Christian formation
- Spiritual disciplines

This research also required an interpretation of biblical and theological material relative to discipleship and Christian formation. Equally critical to this research were the participants of the survey. There was much to be garnered from those who lead and those who are nurtured by the church's efforts. The outcomes of this research will be discussed in this final chapter.

Outcomes

In total this research included 244 participants as follows:

- 20 adolescents
- 21 pastors
- 12 youth leaders
- 32 Family Islands millennials
- 20 millennial students abroad
- 139 millennials in New Providence

Two hundred forty-four participants represent about 6% of the church's members. The desired goal was 10% of the membership. Nonetheless, the information willingly provided by the participants leaves much to be considered when discussing the way forward.

More than 70% of the overall participants in this survey identified as being female. The amount of female participation is reflective not only of the researcher's reach but also the high female participation in many Pentecostal churches in the Bahamas. However, in the pastoral survey, 95% of the participants were male. This is indicative of

the ratio of male to females in pastoral leadership in the COGOP in New Providence and to some degree the Bahamas.

More than 85% of the participants identified as Christians. However, what was unclear is how the participants interpreted the question. Their response can be viewed in a broad sense meaning Christianity is the religion they are most aligned with, or the participants were indicating that they have a personal relationship with Christ and are followers of his teachings.

The overall results from this survey also demonstrated that for the most part many of the participants attended church frequently and regularly participate in acts of kindness. This is not surprising considering the Bahamas has many churches and is known as a Christian nation. Additionally, tourism is the Bahamas' number one industry; as such, many Bahamians are accustomed to serving and assisting others. Culturally, this is the Bahamian way of life.

Despite the results of this survey indicating that church attendance was a frequent practice, what was not clear is whether the purpose of church attendance was primarily for worship and celebration, fellowship or both. Additional questions on the survey form pertaining to fellowship and worship and celebration could have provided further clarity.

Another common theme throughout this survey was the lack of satisfaction in one's spirituality. More than 70% of the participants indicated that they were not satisfied with their spirituality. Similarly, more than 70% of the participants indicated their willingness to practice spiritual disciplines by choosing yes or maybe when asked, "If there was evidence that spiritual disciplines can aid Christian formation, would they be

willing to try them?” Such results can be interpreted as a desire to grow or merely a realization that there are new opportunities to help them grow spiritually.

This research also indicated that participants prayed more frequently than they read the Bible. Many teens and millennials have smart phones which allow Scriptures to be delivered daily on their phones, yet reading the Scriptures was an infrequent practice among this demography.

Fasting in the COGOP in the Bahamas context typically involves giving up food and/or refraining from certain foods. The length of a fast can vary from one individual to another and can range from one meal a day or days of refraining from all foods except water. Fasting is one of the spiritual disciplines that participants across the board confirmed as an infrequent practice.

Among teens, 45% indicated they rarely rest; 45% of millennials studying abroad indicated that they never rest on the Sabbath. Similarly, 28% of millennials residing in the Bahamas indicated that they rarely rest, and 21% said they never rest on a Sabbath. These results indicated that a significant portion of the teen and millennial participants do not enjoy the rest of the Sabbath. The impact of lack of rest can extend beyond spirituality to one’s physical health. It is recommended that further research be conducted in this area to determine what led to these results.

The adolescents’ survey also reflected that while 70% of the participants identified as being Christian, only 60% knew what a spiritual discipline was. Also unique to the adolescents’ research was the fact that 75% of the participants stated that they either attended church often or always. However, since many teens do not drive, it usually the parent or guardian that makes the decision when adolescents attend church.

Thus, these results suggest that third-party involvement (parent/guardian) influenced or was the enforcement of the frequency of these practices.

On the other hand, more than 60% of the participants showed great inconsistency when it came to prayer, fasting, reading the Bible, and meditating on the Scriptures. Since the spiritual disciplines that required personal commitment and discipline, were practiced less frequently, this can indicate a lack of personal discipline in this demography.

Alternatively, these results may also be reflective of the fact that many adolescents also indicated that they did not know what a spiritual disciple is. If one does not know how certain habits shape their spirituality there would be no incentive for them to practice these habits/disciplines frequently.

Notwithstanding the infrequent practices of certain spiritual disciplines, the overall results indicated that 80% of the participants seemed open to practicing spiritual disciplines if it were proven that it could aid their Christian formation.

One of the main themes the survey illustrated was the participants' view of the church in Christian formation. While only 33% of the millennials in the Family Islands felt that the church could do more to assist youths in their Christian formation, 67% of millennials in New Providence felt there was more the church could do. The responsibility that the participants placed on the church in their Christian formation can also explain why many participants indicated that they attended church regularly. However, while the results reflect that many participants feel as if the church could do more to assist with their Christian formation, personal responsibility and discipline cannot be negated in one's discipleship efforts.

The results of the pastors' and youth leaders' survey indicated that at least 50% of both pastors and youth leaders' credit Christian education as being important in their Christian formation. Congruently, many participants from both groups also noted that youth ministry played a significant role as well. Additionally, of pastors 48% and youth leaders 72% agreed that prayer and other spiritual disciplines were very effective ministries in the church's current discipleship efforts. Similarly of pastors 23% and of youth leaders 33% indicated that prayer and spiritual disciplines were instrumental in their own formative years.

The results of the survey also indicated that youth leaders ranked fine arts equally with prayer. This is because many youths participate in dance, singing, drama, mime, or music. However, the pastors ranked youth ministry equal to prayer as a discipleship tool, which shows the value and confidence pastors have in the impact of youth ministry.

Of the pastors, 48% ranked youth ministry as a current discipleship resource the church uses in its discipleship efforts, yet 57% percent of the pastors acknowledged that they do not have a youth ministry budget. Of the youth leaders, 92% indicated that their church did not have a youth leadership budget. Such a variance can suggest that many pastors have funds allocated for youth ministry activities, unbeknown to youth leaders.

The lack of available funds proved to be one of the most agreed upon challenges that youth leaders identified since 58% of youth leaders specified it as a challenge they face. Only 12% of pastors identified this as a challenge even though 57% of them acknowledged there was no youth ministry budget in place. This research also revealed that only 19% of the pastors recommended more funding, although 58% of the youth felt that more funding was required moving forward.

Pastors (43%) and youth leaders (53%) indicated that “inconsistency” was a challenge they were facing in their discipleship efforts. Since inconsistency can be interpreted as a lack of commitment, there is a concern as to whether the infrequent practices of certain spiritual disciplines also support youth leaders and pastor’s perception of lack of commitment. Further research would be required to determine if this is the case. However, what cannot be ignored is that considering the number of participants who identified as Christians one might have expected a higher frequency of some of the more fundamental spiritual disciplines such as prayer, reading the Bible, and meditation.

This research also revealed that 48% of the pastors felt that more interaction and dialogue was important to the way forward, yet many youth leaders indicated that more funding, creative programs, and more use of social media and technology were a higher priority than dialogue and interaction. One reason these results differ may be because the youth leaders already have more opportunities to interact with teens and millennials at youth meeting whereas the pastors may not have the same amount of opportunities.

Pastors (41%) indicated and 58% of youth leaders agreed that home reinforcement was a challenge. Since the home environment may not be nurturing what is being shared at church there may be an indication for the church to be more intentional about engaging the older population or the wider community as well.

There was an apparent difference in satisfaction with the results of the church’s current discipleship practices: 43% of the pastors said they were satisfied with the church’s current practices with only 14% stating there was room for improvement. By contrast, no youth leader indicated satisfaction with the results. Instead, 37% of the youth leaders were not satisfied with the church’s current discipleship efforts and 67% of the

youth leaders indicated that there was room for improvement. These results indicate a significant difference of perspective between the two leaders.

Generally, the results indicated that there are challenges in the church's current discipleship efforts. There is some agreement as to what the challenges are the church face but different perspectives of what changes are needed for better results in the future. Millennials studying abroad provided feedback by sharing the new experiences they enjoyed while away from home. They also provided recommendations as to how to improve the way we currently do youth ministries in the Bahamas.

Pastors were generally cooperative with this research, as many of them promptly acknowledged receipt of the survey and provided a reasonable time frame when they would be responding. Many youth leaders required more nudging to complete the survey.

While the results proved informative, this research could also have included additional questions that may have provided greater insight on the effectiveness of different traditions. The adolescents and millennials survey could have asked the following questions:

- What, if anything, can the church do differently or better to help you in your spiritual walk?
- What are your favorite facets of youth ministry?
- What aspects of youth ministry do you least enjoy?
- What programs does the church offer that you enjoy most?
- What hinders you from fasting or resting on the Sabbath?

The pastors and youth leaders survey could have also asked follow-up questions to some of the questions asked.

Also, a focus group for teens and possibly a few case studies on discipleship may have proven to be more insightful.

Recommendations for Pastors and Youth Leaders

Professional Training

The international office as well as the national leadership and training arm of the COGOP in the Bahamas has been very intentional in promoting seminary training lately. While many pastors have enrolled and, in some cases, graduated from seminary, there are still quite a few pastors and youth leaders who have not.

One recommendation that was given included the recognition of mental health problems. Additionally, it was recommended by millennials studying abroad that the church provide more holistic training, improved communication and be more understanding. Professional training will better equip youth leaders and pastors alike to serve youth better.

Often when issues are presented in the church, prayer is the only measure taken. While prayer should be included in the church's response, there are occasions where members may require additional professional help. Receiving training on how to identify triggers or issues within the congregation equips the pastor and youth leader to be in a better position to provide the most appropriate type of care. Training also equips a youth leader to systematically address problems they identify while dealing with youths. Youth leaders should not be appointed if they have no interest in being certified for the position they hold. While receiving a certificate does not guarantee that the youth leader is equipped to face all challenges they will face as a youth leader, proper training does

provide the youth leader with some level of competencies to better address the needs of those entrusted in their care.

Lead pastors, associate pastors, youth leaders, and assistant youth leaders alike should ensure that they receive some formal training relative to youth. Although teens and millennials are only a portion of the membership, it is important for pastors and youth leaders to connect with members that fall within this category. Pastors and youth leaders alike must understand the challenges today's youth face and speak the language that teens and millennials can relate to.

Training requirement should not be educational only. The youth leader should be disciplined and spiritually mature: having sound judgement, discerning, and committed to prayer and spiritual growth. This survey also revealed that both pastors and youth leaders agreed that training and development were effective discipleship resources of the church. Hence formal and on-the-job training is critical. Appointing a person to a position they have not been trained for can be harmful for the untrained or unprepared leader as well as disastrous for those they lead.

Provide Funding

Adequate funding is a must to the successful operation of any program. Adolescents typically do not work; as such, they have little funding to invest to sustain a well-run program. While millennials do work, they also contribute to the overall church fund and in many instances by themselves cannot be responsible for solely funding the ministry the church has in place to minister to them. It is essential for pastors to allocate if only a reasonable startup fund to provide for the basic needs of a healthy youth

program. While the youth department can find ways to use the startup capital to create more funds for their program, the church has to set aside a fair amount of funds to operate an effective youth ministry. Adequate funding is a game changer as it can influence decisions regarding, venue, the use of technology, and creativity.

One of the essential reasons a youth budget is necessary is to ensure that it can invest in training for emerging leaders and provide youth leaders with a stipend for their efforts. While the church may be able to cover fully the cost of training for its leaders and emerging leaders, those who feel called to minister to youth should also be willing to invest in their own preparation to serve.

Full-Time Pastors and Youth Leaders

Bi-vocational ministries are common for many pastors in the COGOP in the Bahamas. However, this survey highlighted that more than 50% of the participants felt as if the church can do more to help them in their Christian formation. Of the pastors, 48% stated one of the things they would change moving forward is more dialogue and interaction with youth. Similarly, 42% of the youth noted that time/availability was one the challenges they face. Full-time pastors and youth leaders could address both scenarios as the youth leader and pastor will not have to focus on two jobs but mainly the needs of their local congregations.

Arrange Transportation

Pastors (12%) and youth leaders (33%) acknowledged that transportation posed a challenge in the church's discipleship efforts. For the most part, many teens and

millennials do not own a vehicle and thus rely on others for transportation to and from youth meetings and church. In the Bahamas, many youth leaders provide transportation for many youths in their group. This is primarily because the transportation system in the Bahamas only operates during the day or shortly after sunset.

Arranged transportation, whether that be by bus or a car-pooling system, can improve attendance to services as well as other church functions. Traveling in shared transportation also encourages fellowship as commuters often bond during the ride from one destination to the other.

Be a Good Example/Incarnational Ministries

Jesus demonstrated the behaviors that his disciples eventually emulated. Pastors and their spouses often hold the most respected positions in local churches. Likewise, many adolescents look up to church leader and often emulate them. Incarnational ministry invites us to clothe ourselves in Christ's humility and take the gospel to unpopular places. One of the best ways to effect change anywhere is to model the expected behavior. Millennials abroad recommended that to improve youth ministries there should be more incarnational ministries, better examples as well as more demonstrations of love, acceptance, and understanding. Demonstration of love is the disciple's way.

Mentor

One step further from modeling good behavior is helping others do the same. 25% of youth leaders indicated that mentorship was of the current effective church's practices.

Similarly, 33% of youth leaders indicated that mentorship was instrumental in their own formation. If those in leadership can provide more mentorship and encourage trustworthy, mature saints to do the same, the discipleship results may also increase.

Sue Edwards and Barbara Newman point out that postmodern tend to be attracted to relationships that fall into place naturally and are unlikely to be part of anything that places programs or structure ahead of organic relationships.¹ Thus the model of mentorship recommended is closer to being a spiritual friend rather than structured mentorship whereby a senior member of the church is assigned to a younger member who they are unable to relate to. The proposed mentorship here is to encourage persons who have a genuine relationship with millennials and teens to intentionally engage them, cheering them on in their Christian walk and being there to support and steer them during personal crisis. More mentorship is required if the church is to reach its fullest potential.

Christian Education Ministry

Both the pastors and youth leaders noted the importance of Christian education in their own formation. The Christian education ministry, whether it be Sunday school or Bible study, can impact the entire church including teens and millennials. The educational ministry of the church then must be extremely intentional about what it addresses. Since pastors oversee the entire church it is important that pastors ensure that what is being taught in the church is not only sound doctrine but also relevant for the congregation's personal needs and for spiritual growth.

1. Sue Edwards and Barbara Newman, *Organic Mentoring: A Mentor's Guide to Relationships with Next Generations Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2014), 49.

It is therefore imperative that both pastors and the youth leaders play close attention to what the congregation's holistic needs are. Many new converts are often intimidated by studying the Holy Scriptures alone. The church should take the lead in ensuring that their members understand and grow affection toward the Word of God. Passionate, skilled teachers can guide teens and millennials through critical topics that can assist in their Christian growth. Additional topics may include spiritual disciplines, scriptures that relate to immigration, finances and social injustice. Such topics are relevant in the Bahamas.

The Christian education arm of the church must also not be afraid to partner with schools and other organizations to ensure that the church impacts teens and millennials in the wider community. Summer breaks can also be used as an opportune time to partner with schools to facilitate longer Vacation Bible Schools. Additionally, there is no reason why the Christian education arm of the church could not create after school programs such as AWANA for children and teens. Similarly, the church could also establish clubs such as Rotaract and Rotary to attract young professionals.

Perhaps one of the greatest educational opportunities the church currently has is through the preschool. If the church were to operate preschools in different districts on New Providence, Bahamian children who enroll can receive a strong Christian foundation. By the time these children are eligible for youth ministry, youth leaders will only have to build on a biblical foundation that had already been established. Additionally, since the COGOP in the Bahamas also intends to build its own primary school, the preschools can serve as a feeder school for that school.

It is equally important, however, that the Christian education ministry of local churches to incorporate the use of technology and social media platforms. This will allow more unchurched persons to be reached. The church can develop apps that deliver daily verses to the members after which a question is asked that they must respond to. Once the question is answered a reward can be given as an incentive to foster E Christian leaning. Additionally, social media platforms can be used for simulcasting short stories and video presentations.

Finally, the education ministry must also provide discipleship classes as recommended by millennials studying abroad. It is essential for the church to facilitate opportunities for practical exercise of what is being taught. Homework assignments, prayer clinics, role-play scenarios, corporate fasting, and short-term community initiatives are all opportunities that the church can consider as a part of its Christian education program.

Consistent, Creative Programs

This is perhaps one of the most challenging areas for youth leaders and pastors alike. However, 14 % of pastors and 33% of youth leaders recognize the need for more creative programs. Sometimes youth leaders blur the lines of holiness by trying to be too creative. At the other times they are so focused on salvation that they only schedule events that many find bland or boring. Another risk youth leaders face when planning events is finding activities that are suitable for all age groups. Many youth leaders who do not have a strong team often face creativity challenges while struggling to keep the momentum going. In the quest for creativity and relatability, substance can be lost.

Programs that build character, reinforce biblical principles, address real-life issues, and include technology are just some of the things to be considered. Also, presenters should be knowledgeable about what they are addressing; events should be diverse. For instance, some can include sports, technology, or academic challenges. Equally there must be opportunities for training and developing in areas such as leadership training and evangelism. Events that focus on developing spiritual disciplines and talents, traveling retreats, camping, workshops, cooking classes, social projects, and charitable initiatives, are all options available to the youth director. Additionally, the youth leader can incorporate fine arts in their youth initiatives to encourage participation

The youth ministry is the primary arm of the church whose sole purposes is to cater to youths of the church. This does mean they all need to be grouped together. Creating subgroups may be necessary, for example, 12-15, 16-20, 21-30, 30 and above. This way the content, activity, and venue can be age appropriate.

Recommendations for Adolescents and Millennials

Create a Rule of Life

One common theme that emerged through all the spiritual disciplines survey is that many participants selected “often” as the more popular choice over “always” except for three categories: expressions of gratitude, church attendance, and participate in kindness to others. Creating a rule of life may encourage teens and millennials to allocate time for other important spiritual disciplines such as reading the Bible, fasting, and praying.

Creating a rule of life will encourage teens and millennials to prioritize time to practice various disciplines. Such activity puts the onus on the individual to be responsible or to be vested in their own growth. Regardless of what opportunities the church provides, everyone still has the obligation to look out for their own soul.

Pursue Mentorship/Be a Mentor or Spiritual Friend

Depending on where an individual is spiritually, they may have the ability to seek out a spiritual friend or mentor or be a spiritual mentor or friend. No one knows it all, and although there may be people in the church open to mentorship, both parties must agree. Adolescents and millennials do not have to wait for someone else to initiate a spiritual friendship or mentorship relationship with them. In many instances they can initiate same. Spiritual companionship can be a great asset during life's many trials and storms.

Show Up/Be Committed

Pastors (53%) and youth leaders (42%) acknowledged that one of the challenges they experience is inconsistency and lack of interest or distraction. If there are opportunities provided by the local church to assist new converts and or youth in their spiritual walk, the correct response for teens and millennials should be to attend these events and possibly encourage others to do so. If the events are unengaging, speak up and offer recommendations that can help improve effectiveness and attendance. Also, the millennials abroad shared several new experiences in this survey they can also share these experiences with their youth leader at home in the Bahamas.

Volunteer/Participate/Be a Part of the Solution

Another challenge noted in this survey was the need for youth workers: 24% of the pastors and 25% of the youth leaders acknowledged this need. Local churches seeking to recruit volunteers can host church fairs comparable to job or college fairs. During the church fairs, leaders in different ministerial areas can explain their involvement in the church and seek persons that can be trained and developed into future leaders on in some instances just support staff for that area. It would be great for youths to volunteer their services, time and giftings to the church.

Volunteering can be an opportunity for the 13% millennials (combined Nassau and the Family Island results) who acknowledged in the survey that there is nothing more the church can do to assist them in Christian formation. If these participants represent a spiritually mature group of millennials, who can serve faithfully in the church, they can be of great assistance to the church, whether that be youth ministry or other areas such as in the use of technology or fine arts, their service can certainly add value to the church.

Conclusion

Bahamians are religious people, for the most part. The preferred religion of the masses both in New Providence and the Family Island remains Christianity. What Christianity means to each person is an area of further study. Additionally, what remains to be further explored is the impact of the church in the overall Bahaman community, both in New Providence and the Bahamas.

There is still a great expectancy from the community for the church to aid them in their Christian formation. The Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas, one of the

most prominent churches in the Bahamas, can respond to this expectation. In fact, it has been doing so for years.

The Christian education ministry of the church has a proven track record, and it is perhaps the best access we have to the community. The possibilities to use this arm of the church to be a lighthouse in the community are endless. All opportunities to enlarge its reach should be explored moving forward.

This research has suggested that the Christian education arm of the church, together with youth ministries and the music and fine arts ministry, VBS, evangelism, and prayer were and, in some instances, still are effective segments of the church. We must build on these resource tools and improve their influence in the wider community and continue to invest in training and leadership development.

Finally, Christian formation involves choice and discipline. Our unique personalities will prefer one spiritual discipline over the other. To ensure that we do not end up with a lopsided spirituality (all head and no heart or self-reflection only and no participation with the world), we must learn to practice different spiritual disciplines and allow our heads, hearts, and hands to work cohesively.

Faithful and appropriate integration of our beliefs with our affections and actions is what our genuine spirituality should consist of. The Holy Spirit guides and empowers us to grow daily into Christ's likeness. This is the essence of Christian formation. Because humans were created in the image and likeness of God, Christian formation is somewhat intrinsic. Discipleship, however, is not. Discipleship is a choice; we should all choose wisely.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF THE BAHAMAS



APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Christian Formation: Discipleship of Youth and Millennials in the Church or Go of Prophecy in the Bahamas.

Principal Investigator: Ghandi Knowles-Thompson, DMin. Candidate, Global Pentecostalism Co-Hort, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary.

PURPOSE

This is a research study. The purpose of this research study is to understand the current spirituality of Adolescents and Millennials in the Bahamas in hopes of learning new ways the church could minister to this group, aiding them in their Christian Formation. The results of this project will be available to Pastors and Youth Leaders throughout the Bahamas. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to participate or allow your child to participate in the study or not. You may ask any questions about the research, what you will be asked to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear.

We are inviting you or your child to participate in this research study because you or your child falls within the age group or which this project is seeking to research. Your feedback is critical to helping the researcher understand the spirituality of teens and millennials

PROCEDURES

This research requires Adolescent participation

- Adolescents (12- 17) make up an important part of the demographic that is critical to research. It is therefore important to secure a consent forms for each minor participating in this study. The questionnaire designed for adolescent have been designed so that it does not include any recognizable personal information. It is the researcher's intent to have 20 minors participate in this research from different COGOP in Nassau. Research is limited to Nassau as the researcher is unable to travel to other Bahama Islands. Since this age group represents the most sensitive demographic of the research, the researcher will be the only person collecting and storing data from adolescents.
- The attached Questionnaire is designed to take anywhere from 3-10 minutes. If you agree to permit your child to participate your /their involvement will be

required for the length of time it takes you to complete the attached questionnaire only.

RISKS

All data collected will be stored in a fire proof safe at the researcher's home. For the period of this project she will be the only person with access to that data. At no time will data collected be shared outside of the parameters required for this project. After this project data collected will be shredded and all data shared in the results of this research will be shared collectively. There are no other foreseeable risks to participating in this questionnaire.

BENEFITS

While there are no personal benefits for participating in this research, the answers provided will help the researcher better understand what if anything the Church of God of Prophecy can do to assist teens in their Christian Formation.

COMPENSATION

No monetary awards or any form of compensation that will be given to participants.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. As no personal data is being collected other than in some cases the age of the participant. Information collected will be stored and presented collectively. If for some reason there emerge patterns that require further elaboration as no personal data was collected, the results of the data will be given anonymously. All raw data from this study will be stored in a safe. In the event of any report or publication from this study, your identity will not be disclosed. Results will be reported in a summarized manner in such a way that you cannot be identified.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Taking pan in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you agree to participate in this study, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to take part, or if you wish to stop your participation at any time, your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. Any information that was submitted that needs to be retracted from the data pool will be destroyed and not included in the study results.

QUESTIONS

Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Ghandi Thompson, 1-242-376-0954 or email me gandiknowles@yahoo.com. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Co-Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. David A. Currie, at: dcume@gordonconwell.edu or 978-646-4176.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

Child's Name
(Printed)_____

Parent or Guardian's (Name
Printed)_____

(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

(Date)

RESEARCHER STATEMENT

I have discussed the above points with the participant/ participant Parent/Guardian. It is my opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

(Signature of Researcher)

(Date)

APPENDIX C
ADOLESCENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Christian Formation Research in Adolescents

This questionnaire is designed to explore opportunities to assist teens and millennials in their Christian Formation and discipleship. The information you provide will be helpful for the researcher to better understand teens and millennials and what the church can do to assist in their Spiritual Formation. This study is being conducted by Ghandi Knowles-Thompson in conjunction with the requirements of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary DMin. Thesis project. Please be assured that all answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with the responses of other participants in this study. The answers that you give will never be linked with your name. By completing this questionnaire, your parent / guardian has given their consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

1. Please select the age group you fall within. ☐ 12-14 ☐ 15-17

2. Are you a male or Female? ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Would you identify as being a Christian? ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Do you know what a Spiritual Discipline is? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Are you satisfied with your Christian life? ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. If there was evidence that Spiritual Disciplines are helpful in Christian Formation would be open to practicing them? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

7. Please select the most suitable number that for the questions below:

5 – always 4 – often 3 – sometimes 2 – rarely 1- never

No	Question	5	4	3	2	1
1	How often do you pray?					
2	How often do you fast?					
3	How often do you read the Bible?					
4	How often do you study the Bible?					
5	How often do you really rest on the Sabbath?					
6	How often do you spend time on self – reflection?					
7	How often do you meditate?					
8	Do you participate in acts of service or kindness to others?					
9	How often do you attend church?					
10	How often do you participate in conversations about God?					

APPENDIX D

PASTORS QUESTIONNAIRE

Christian Formation Research

This questionnaire is designed to explore opportunities to assist teens and millennials in their Christian formation and discipleship. The information you provide will be helpful for the researcher to better understand teens and millennials and what the church can do to assist them in their spiritual formation. This study is being conducted by Ghandi Knowles-Thompson in conjunction with the requirements of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary DMin program. Please be assured that all your answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with the responses of other participants in this study. The answers that you give will never be linked with your name. By completing this questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

1) Please indicate your gender.

☐ Male

☐ Female

2) What is your current position in the church?

☐ Pastor

☐ Associate Pastor

3) In your earlier years in church, what church traditions helped shaped your spirituality?

- ☐ Youth Meetings
- ☐ Prayer Meetings
- ☐ Music and Fine Arts (choir, band, dance, or drama)
- ☐ Evangelism and Outreach
- ☐ Christian Education Ministry (Bible studies and Sunday school)
- ☐ Mentorship
- ☐ Youth Camp
- ☐ Training and Development
- ☐ Other

4) What are some of the areas your church currently focusses on it relates to discipleship of teens and millennials?

- ☐ Christian Education (Sunday school/Bible study)
- ☐ Opportunities to Practice fasting/Scripture reading/journaling/meditation
- ☐ Mentorship
- ☐ Vacation Bible School
- ☐ Music and Fine Arts (choir, band, dance, or drama)
- ☐ Evangelism and Outreach
- ☐ Training and Leadership Development
- ☐ Youth Meeting/Youth Sundays
- ☐ Church Participation/Fellowship
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Other

- 5) How would you rate these practices / disciplines effectiveness with 1 being the least effective and 4 being the most effective?

		4 - very effective	3- effective	2- barely effective	1- not effective
	Practice / Discipline	4	3	2	1
1	Vacation Bible School				
2	Christian Education (Sunday school/Bible study)				
3	Prayer and Other Spiritual Disciplines				
4	Mentorship				
5	Vacation Bible School				
6	Music and Fine Arts (choir, band, dance, or drama)				
7	Evangelism and Outreach				
8	Training and Leadership Development				
9	Youth Meeting/Youth Sundays				
10	Church Participation/Fellowship				
11	Sports				
12	Other				

- 6) What is the rationale behind these practices?

- ☐ Holistic Development
☐ Salvation/Spiritual Growth
☐ Training and Development/Preparation for leadership
☐ Participation/Fellowship
☐ Other

- 7) Are you pleased with the results of your current practices and why?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Room for improvement

8) What if anything, would you change as it relates to how you interact with youth and millennials?

- ☐ Programming (changing the current way youth ministry occurs in your church)
- ☐ More dialogue and interaction
- ☐ More ways of integrating youth in church and ministry
- ☐ More use of social media and technology
- ☐ More funding
- ☐ More mentorship opportunities
- ☐ Nothing

9) What are some of the challenges you face in your youth discipleship efforts?

- ☐ Lack of commitment/Consistency
- ☐ Lack of youth leaderships/Volunteers
- ☐ Lack of attention/Interest
- ☐ Home/Parent reinforcement
- ☐ Time/Availability
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Distraction/ Peer pressure
- ☐ Funding
- ☐ Creative /Development programs
- ☐ Social Media/Technology

10) Does your church have a Youth Ministry budget?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

APPENDIX E
YOUTH LEADERS QUESTIONNAIRE

Christian Formation Research

This questionnaire is designed to explore opportunities to assist teens and millennials in their Christian formation and discipleship. The information you provide will be helpful for the researcher to better understand teens and millennials and what the church can do to assist them in their spiritual formation. This study is being conducted by Ghandi Knowles-Thompson in conjunction with the requirements of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary DMin program. Please be assured that all your answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with the responses of other participants in this study. The answers that you give will never be linked with your name. By completing this questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

11) Please indicate your gender.

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

12) What is your current position in the church?

- ☐ Youth Leader
- ☐ Assistant Youth Leader

13) In your earlier years in church, what church traditions helped shaped your spirituality?

- ☐ Youth Meetings
- ☐ Prayer Meetings
- ☐ Music and Fine Arts (choir, band, dance, or drama)
- ☐ Evangelism and Outreach
- ☐ Christian Education Ministry (Bible studies and Sunday school)
- ☐ Mentorship
- ☐ Youth Camp
- ☐ Training and Development
- ☐ Other

14) What are some of the areas your church currently focusses on it relates to discipleship of teens and millennials?

- ☐ Christian Education (Sunday school/Bible study)
- ☐ Opportunities to Practice fasting/Scripture reading/journaling/meditation
- ☐ Mentorship
- ☐ Vacation Bible School
- ☐ Music and Fine Arts (choir, band, dance, or drama)
- ☐ Evangelism and Outreach
- ☐ Training and Leadership Development
- ☐ Youth Meeting/Youth Sundays
- ☐ Church Participation/Fellowship
- ☐ Sports

☐ Other

15) How would you rate these practices/disciplines effectiveness with 1 being the least effective and 4 being the most effective?

		4 - very effective	3- effective	2- barely effective	1- not effective
	Practice/Discipline	4	3	2	1
1	Vacation Bible School				
2	Christian Education (Sunday school/Bible study)				
3	Prayer and Other Spiritual Disciplines				
4	Mentorship				
5	Vacation Bible School				
6	Music and Fine Arts (choir, band, dance, or drama)				
7	Evangelism and Outreach				
8	Training and Leadership Development				
9	Youth Meeting/Youth Sundays				
10	Church Participation/Fellowship				
11	Sports				
12	Other				

16) What is the rationale behind these practices?

- ☐ Holistic Development
- ☐ Salvation/Spiritual Growth
- ☐ Training and Development/Preparation for leadership
- ☐ Participation/Fellowship
- ☐ Other

17) Are you pleased with the results of your current practices and why?

☐ Yes

- ☐ No
- ☐ Room for improvement

18) What, if anything, would you change as it relates to how you interact with youth and millennials?

- ☐ Programming (changing the current way youth ministry occurs in your church)
- ☐ More dialogue and interaction
- ☐ More ways of integrating youth in church and ministry
- ☐ More use of social media and technology
- ☐ More funding
- ☐ More mentorship opportunities
- ☐ Nothing

19) What are some of the challenges you face in your youth discipleship efforts?

- ☐ Lack of commitment/Consistency
- ☐ Lack of youth leaderships/Volunteers
- ☐ Lack of attention /Interest
- ☐ Home/Parent reinforcement
- ☐ Time/Availability
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Distraction/Peer pressure
- ☐ Funding
- ☐ Creative/Development programs
- ☐ Social Media/Technology

20) Does your church have a youth ministry budget?

☐ Yes

☐ No

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BAHAMIAN MILLENNIALS STUDYING ABROAD

Research on Christian Formation in Young Adults

This questionnaire is designed to explore opportunities to assist teens and millennials in their Christian formation and discipleship. The information you provide will be helpful for the researcher to better understand teens and millennials and what the church can do to assist in their spiritual formation. This study is being conducted by Ghandi Knowles-Thompson in conjunction with the requirements of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary DMin thesis-project. Please be assured that all answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with the responses of other participants in this study. The answers that you give will never be linked with your name. By completing this questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

1) What is your gender?

☐ Female

☐ Male

2) Please select the age group you fall within.

☐ 18 - 25

☐ 26 - 30

☐ 31 – 35

☐ 35 +

3) What year are you currently enrolled in your studies?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Graduate
- ☐ Postgraduate

4) Would you say that you are a practicing Christian?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5) Did you attend youth ministry regularly before you went off to school? If no, why not?

6) What other areas in church were you active in before you left for school?

7) Are you participating in any of these areas now?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8) Have you had any new experiences since being off to school that affected helped you in your to mature in your spiritual formation? If so, kindly briefly explain without the use of any names.

- 9) What recommendations would you offer to youth leaders and pastors to help young adults in their Christian formation?
-

10) Please select the most suitable number that for the questions below.

5 – always 4 – often 3 – sometimes 2 – rarely
1- never

No	Question	5	4	3	2	1
1	How often do you pray?					
2	How often do you fast?					
3	How often do you read the Bible?					
4	How often do you study the Bible?					
5	Do you attend a Christian-based youth program?					
6	How often do you spend time on self-reflection?					
7	How often do you meditate on the Scriptures?					
8	Do you participate in acts of service or kindness to others?					
9	How often do you attend church?					
10	How often do you participate in conversations about God?					

APPENDIX G

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MILLENNIALS IN THE BAHAMAS

Christian Formation Research in Young Adults

This questionnaire is designed to explore opportunities to assist teens and millennials in their Christian formation and discipleship. The information you provide will be helpful for the researcher to better understand teens and millennials and what the church can do to assist in their spiritual formation. This study is being conducted by Ghandi Knowles-Thompson in conjunction with the requirements of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary DMin thesis-project. Please be assured that all answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with the responses of other participants in this study. The answers that you give will never be linked with your name. By completing this questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

1. Please select the age group you fall within.

☐ 18-25

☐ 26-30

☐ 31-35

☐ 35+

2. What is your gender?

☐ Female

☐ Male

3. Would you say you are a practicing Christian?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Are you satisfied with your spiritual life?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. If there was evidence that spiritual disciplines were helpful in Christian formation, would you be interested in practicing them more consistently?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe

6. Is there more the church can do to assist you with your Christian formation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe

7. Please select the most suitable number that for the questions below

5 – always

4 – often

3 – sometimes

2 – rarely

1- never

No	Question	5	4	3	2	1
1	How often do you pray?					
2	How often do you fast?					

3	How often do you read the Bible?					
4	How often do you meditate on the Scriptures?					
5	How often do you rest on the Sabbath?					
6	How often do you express gratitude to God?					
7	Do you participate in acts of service or kindness to others?					
8	How often do you attend church?					
9	How often do you participate in conversations about God?					

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